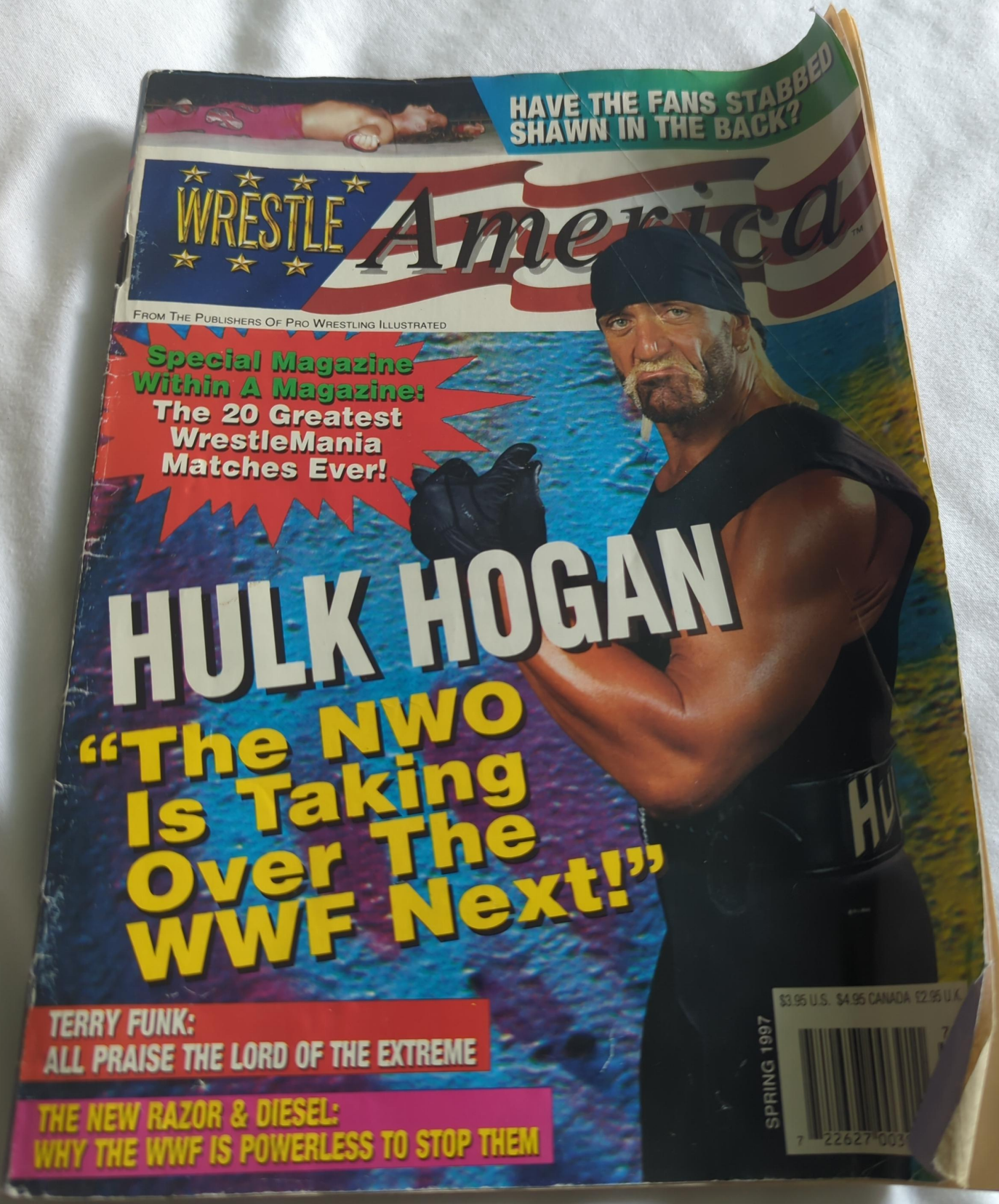
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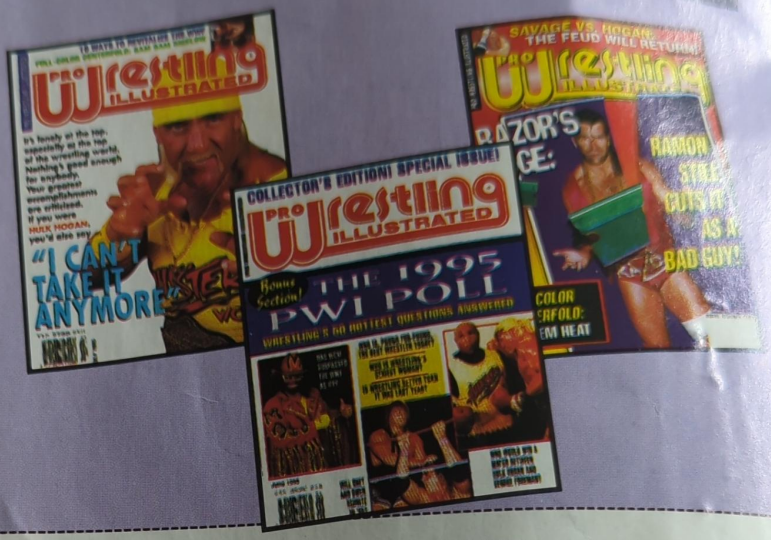

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Alex Krasnopolsky

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STANLEY WESTON
Founder

PUBLISHER ..... Stuart M. Saks
EDITOR-IN CHIEF ..... Dave Lenker
SENIOR EDITOR ..... Bill Apter
MANAGING EDITOR ..... Brandi Mankiewicz
SENIOR ART DIDECTOR ..... Wendy Vetter
ART DIRECTORS ..... Kim Branson
Joseph Kalman
Alex Krasnopolsky
Lisa Vitter
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR ..... Bob Eddy
PRODUCTION ASSOCIATES ..... Cliff Campo
Ron Frankhouser
Jackie Haag
SENIOR WRITERS ..... David Rosenbaum
Andy Rodriguez
Eddie Ellner
Brian Ethier
Steve Anderson
PHOTO EDITOR ..... Jason Ross Lavin
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS ..... Matt Brock
Elizabeth A. Hunter
Craig Peters

VICE PRESIDENT MARKETING
David Gerhardt

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT CIRCULATION
Kenneth J. Gudaitis

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Robert Nucci

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
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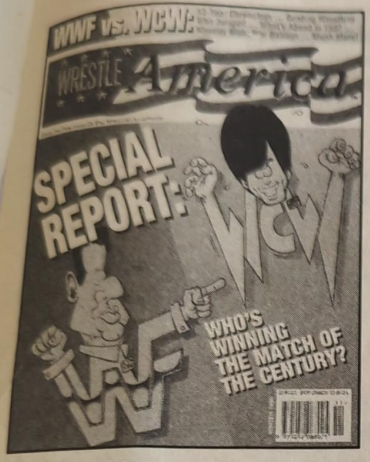


Our Winter 1996 issue featured a special in-depth look at the war between the WWF and WCW. Many readers wrote to say they found it very interesting.

WAR AND PEACE

The biggest wrestling news story of this decade has to be the escalating war between the WWF and WCW, and although I knew it started long before the debut of *WCW Monday Nitro*, I didn't realize just how long it has been going on ("Of Course, You Know, This Means War!" WWF vs. WCW: A Chronology Of Events," Winter 1996). The casual rivalry between these two divisions was obvious to me in the 1980s, but I really didn't know the battle had been so vicious for such a long time.

What amazed me most was the business dealings Vince McMahon Jr. made to expand his company and to reduce the number of competing organizations, like the AWA, Georgia Championship Wrestling, and others. It is actually quite an eye-opener, considering McMahon publicly lashed out at Ted Turner last summer for what he considered unfair competition. I find this ironic since McMahon basically did the same during the 1980s. I guess it's that "do as I say and not as I do" theory.

Now, with the Turner-Time Warner merger, it will be interesting to see what the next year holds for the war. Will it end? I doubt it. Will the mudslinging and underhanded tactics get worse? Without a doubt. I just hope wrestling can survive.

JERRY ROBINSON
Philadelphia, PA

I would like to commend WRESTLE AMERICA for its in-depth coverage of the WWF-WCW war. The whole section was quite intriguing. I especially liked the section dealing with the Monday night ratings war, and the list of the Nielsen ratings from the beginning. It's a good gauge of just how back and forth this battle has been. As soon as you think one has the advantage, it's quickly lost to the other. I think it's interesting to note that these ratings show that on Monday nights, more than two million people watch wrestling. As a fan who cares about the longevity of the sport, that is great news. It means that wrestling is popular again.

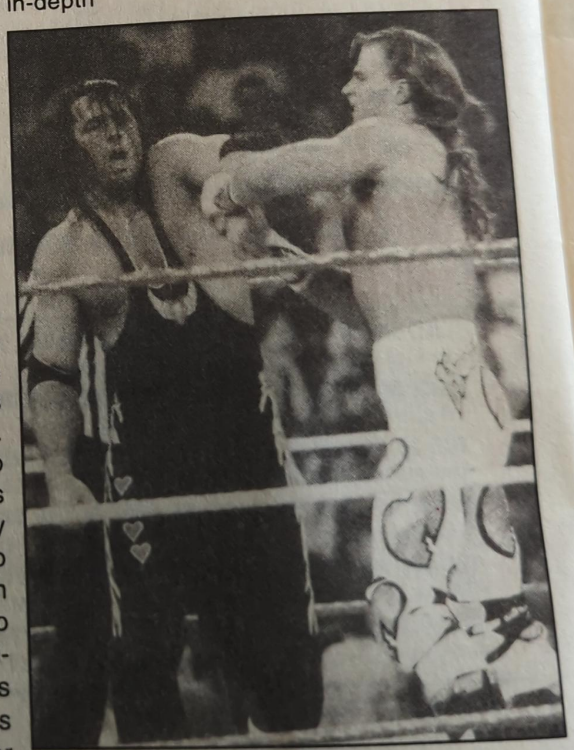
BRENDA HERMAN
Knoxville, TN

POINT OF RESPECT

I found some of the points made by Dave Rosenbaum regarding Bret Hart to be a bit harsh ("Point/Counterpoint: Bret Hart Is Being Too Hard On Shawn Michaels," Fall 1996). While Shawn has been accused of being little more than an immature playboy and a sex symbol who's not necessarily an ideal role model, Rosenbaum also lambastes Bret Hart for being self-righteous and unworthy, which I can't understand.

Bret has tried in every way to set a good example, including attempting to patch things up within his family. He brought nothing but honor to the WWF World title.

(Continued on page 6)



The Bret Hart-Shawn Michaels feud is heating up again. Reader Helen Thompson believes Dave Rosenbaum was overly critical of "The Hitman" in something he wrote in the Fall 1996 issue.

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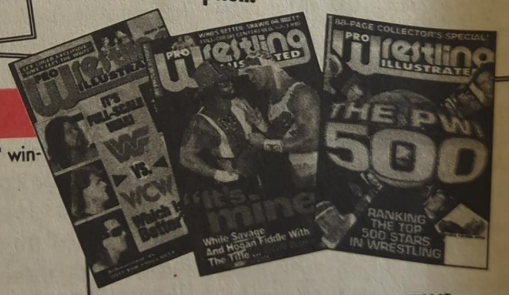

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Stan Hansen won the AWA World title by defeating which champion?
1) Rick Martel
2) Nick Bockwinkel
3) Curt Hennig
4) Verne Gagne

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1) London, England
2) Toronto, Ontario
3) Pyongyang, North Korea
4) Tokyo, Japan

True or False: Hulk Hogan is the only wrestler to appear on the cover of Sports Illustrated
1) True
2) False

Which of the following cities did NOT host a portion of WrestleMania II?
1) Chicago, Illinois
2) Atlantic City, New Jersey
3) Uniondale, New York
4) Los Angeles, California

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Mailbag

(Continued from page 4)

Fans were told time after time about how Bret had defended the title night after night without ducking the challenge of anyone, even on nights he was sick or injured. This, I think, is what led to him having comparatively short title reigns. To accuse Bret of being self-righteous just because he doesn't like the way Shawn carries himself in the ring is foolish. Bret covets the title, and he treated it with the respect the belt deserved. Plus he always acted like a champion when he wore it. Shawn, on the other hand, sometimes acted like a fool, but he did give the fans a great match every night.

I think Bret has trouble believing that Shawn respected the title when he had it, even though Shawn's fans know that he did.

HELEN THOMPSON
Glenrothes, Scotland

SHE REALLY LOVES IT!

I find it hard to believe that Elizabeth is not enjoying herself with the New World Order. She always acts so terrified of "Hollywood" Hulk Hogan and company, but I am sure she secretly loves being part of the group. If she didn't, she could easily get out of it by just leaving, getting a lawyer, and filing a grievance against the NWO. The truth is that Elizabeth is just as evil as they are, if not worse.

Remember, not long ago, she spent all her alimony money from Randy Savage on lavish gifts for herself and Ric Flair. She wickedly enjoyed spending every dime, but we're supposed to believe that she's now this innocent lady who's in need of a knight in shining armor to rescue her from these ruthless men?

It seems most fans are falling for her routine, but I'm not.

If you judge by the look on Elizabeth's face when she's hanging around with the New World Order, you'd conclude that she hates being with the group, but reader Hannah Harvey believes she secretly loves it.

Elizabeth is playing on the fans' emotions with the hope of diverting attention from the rest of the NWO and getting sympathy from the soft-hearted fans. This way she can do some devious things and not get questioned, since the fans will just think she's being forced to do it.

HANNAH HARVEY
Butler, PA

NICE ALTERNATIVE

I have found a new alternative to the constant barrage of WCW and WWF: the American Wrestling Federation. Why is it different? Because there is no constant promoting of pay-per-views, no selling of T-shirts, no 1-900 phone lines, just wrestling. The AWF has an

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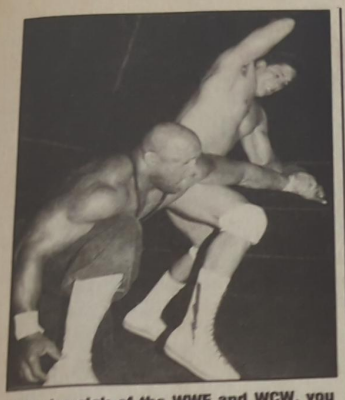

If you're sick of the WWF and WCW, you might want to check out Tito Santana and Tony Atlas in the American Wrestling Federation. Reader Bruce Gray has, and he loves it!

impressive lineup of veteran wrestlers as well. Tony Atlas, Hercules, The Road Warriors, and Tito Santana are just a few of the AWF regulars.

I certainly hope the AWF makes an impact and is able to stick around, because it is definitely a refreshing alternative to some of the wrestling "infomercials" we are seeing now.

BRUCE GRAY
Orlando, FL

VIVA LUCHA LIBRE!

For the past few years, many fans have been touting the abilities of Mexican stars like Konnan, Psicosis, and Rey Misterio Jr., saying that these guys are the future of wrestling. Now these guys are really making an impact on mainstream wrestling, and I am in awe of their abilities. The Lucha style that is now being showcased in both WCW and, most recently, the WWF, is making wrestling worth watching again. I just hope these talented guys will be taken seriously by the promoters and not just used as sideshow features for a few months because it's the latest fad.

ARIANA POORE
Coconut Creek, FL ☐

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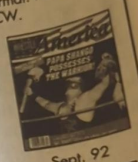
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BACK ISSUES

Locker Room Report

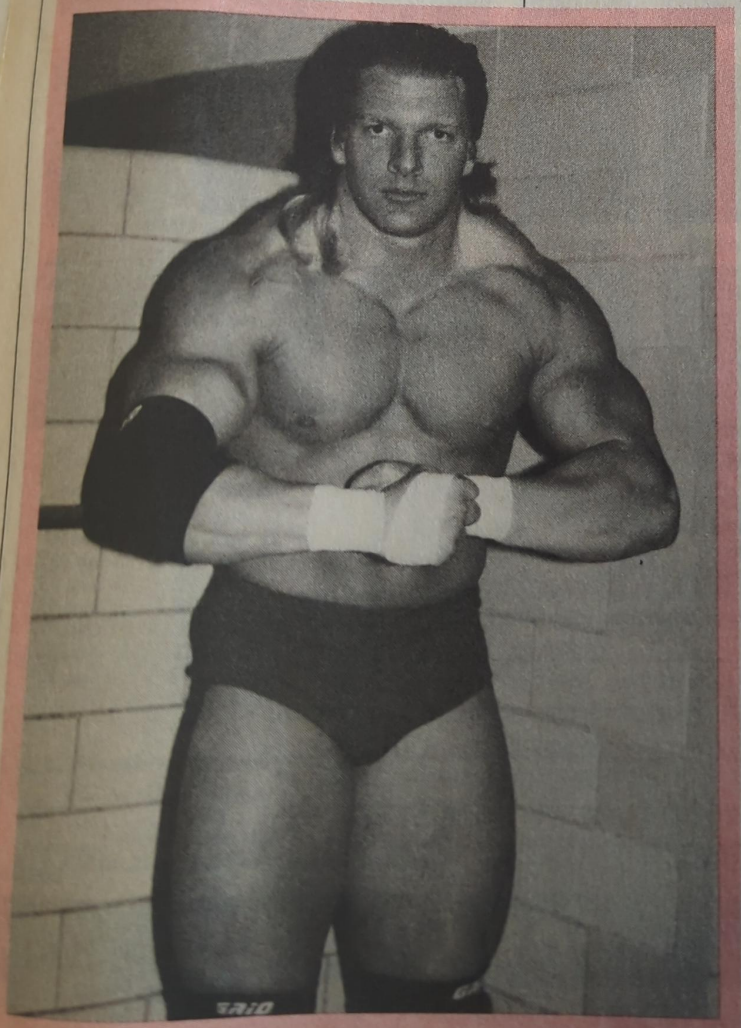
with Bill Apter

HIS NAME USED to be Jean-Paul LeVeque ... and Terra Ryzing, but now he's the WWF Intercontinental champion. Now don't go turning to the ratings page in this magazine looking for the name, then call me saying, "Bill, you've gone crazy! The WWF Intercontinental champion is Hunter Hearst Helmsley."

Killer Kowalski knew Hunter Hearst Helmsley long before he was Hunter Hearst Helmsley.

"I remember him coming into my gym the first day," said Kowalski, who long ago established himself as one of the greatest and most vicious rulebreakers in history. "Big kid. Tall, lanky, long blond hair. Tells me, 'I want you to train me to be a wrestler.'"

This is how Hunter Hearst Helmsley looked shortly after he left Killer Kowalski's training school a few years ago. Helmsley has undergone some name changes since then, but the Killer still thinks very highly of his talents.



"I told him, 'Kid, the first thing you gotta do is get a real wrestling name! But like most young kids, he didn't believe me. He wanted his name up in lights, which meant he wanted his real name up in lights. I said to him, 'Kid, you think my mother named me Killer?'

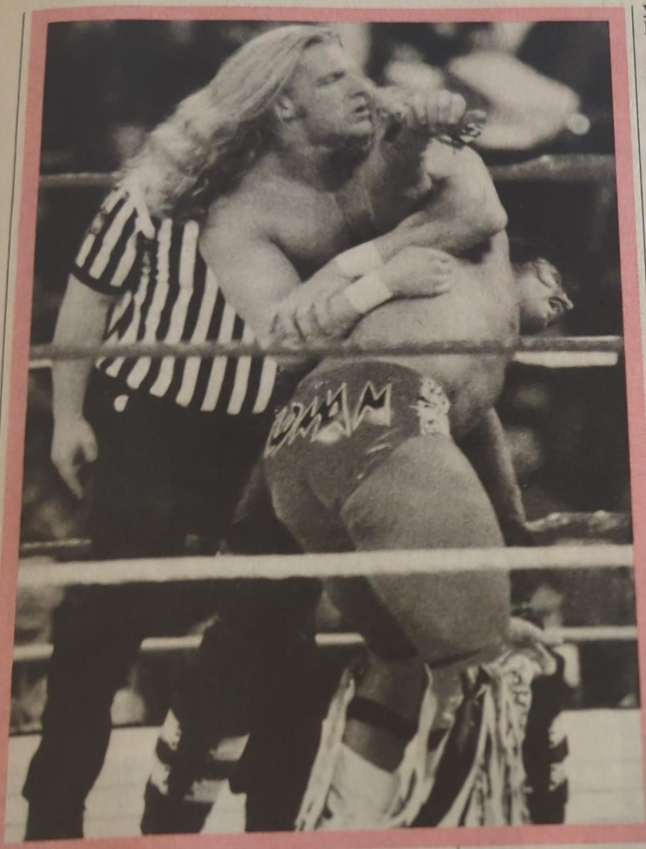
"He learned his lessons about wrestling a lot faster than he learned his lessons about self-promotion. And then he goes and changes his name to Hunter Hearst Helmsley?"

The faulty name change is about the only bad thing Kowalski has to say about his protege, who in October defeated Marc Mero, the former Johnny B. Badd, for the I-C title. That and Helmsley's penchant for surrounding himself with beautiful women.

"Good-looking kid, Helmsley, but that'll work against ya as much as it works for ya," Kowalski said. "Gotta keep your mind on business when you're in the ring. Me, I knew plenty of women, but I never even let 'em watch my matches. Then you got the broads talkin' to ya about wrestling, and the last thing I wanna talk about with a broad is wrestling. When Helmsley brought them to the ring with him, they were an obvious distraction.

"The kid has enough distractions the way it is. I'm glad he got rid of the women."

Helmsley, who made his debut in 1991, grew up in Greenwich, Connecticut, just a stone's throw away from Stamford, corporate headquarters of the WWF. The way things work, if you grow up in Green Bay, Wisconsin, you dream about playing for the Packers. Grow up in the Bronx and you dream about playing for the Yankees. Grow



Helmsley uses an abdominal stretch on Marc Mero, the man he beat for the WWF Intercontinental title in October. HHH has not forgotten the difference Kowalski's guidance has made in his career.

up in Wimbledon, England, and you dream about being a tennis star. Grow up near Stamford and the WWF is one of the first things on your mind.

But for Helmsley, an athlete in high school who was always more interested in girls than winning letters, in driving around in his parents' Mercedes than working on his grades, wrestling was always a dream. Then one day he woke up and realized he didn't know what he wanted to do with his life. He thought he could be a wrestler, and although he had had some formal training at a young age, he wasn't sure it was the right career move. Somebody told him to visit Kowalski's school in Reading, Massachusetts. Like many kids who don't know a thing about heritage, he didn't know much about Kowalski.

"You got a lot of growing up to do," a gym teacher told him. "First, read up on your wrestling history. Then go visit Kowalski."

That's what he did. Looking back, I remember a day about seven years ago, when our editorial offices were still in Rockville Centre, New York. Our secretary, Natalie, came back and said, "Bill, there's a guy on the phone that wants to know everything about Killer Kowalski. What should I tell him?"

"Tell him to order back issues," I said.

"That was me," Helmsley reminded me a few months ago.

I don't know whether Helmsley ordered those back issues, but about three months later, he apparently walked into Kowalski's gym and recited Killer's entire career.

"Never heard anything like it," Kowalski recalled. "He's just standing there, telling me about every match I ever won, every ear I ever bit. When he got to the losses, I told him, 'Okay, kid, I know. I lived it. Now what do you want?"

"I want you to train me," Helmsley said.

"Why?" Kowalski asked.

Not expecting the question, Helmsley was momentarily stunned. But he quickly recovered.

"Because I heard you were the best," Helmsley said. "And because I don't know what else to do."

Whether he felt sorry for the kid—doubtful—or whether he saw some potential in Helmsley's still-developing 6'5" body—more likely—Kowalski spent the next few months training Helmsley. He taught him about killer instinct, how to prepare for a match, and how to wrestle in pain.

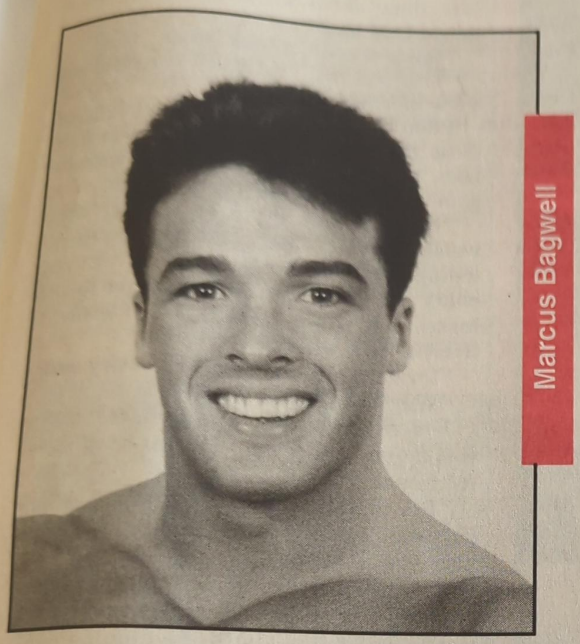
"Hardest-working student I've ever had," Kowalski said. "Never missed a day, never complained, and didn't stop even when he got hurt. Had a lot of heart. You look for that more than anything else—heart—because there are a lot of talented athletes out there, but only a select few got what it takes inside."

A few years later, Kowalski sent the kid out on his own, confident that he would one day hear a lot more about him. And he did, as Hunter Hearst Helmsley.

"Wouldn't have picked the name myself," Kowalski said. "But what does it matter? He's the Intercontinental champion, and he's only just started to do things in this sport. Name doesn't mean a thing. Maybe one day they'll call him Killer." □

Straight Talk

with Brandi Mankiewicz



Marcus Bagwell

ASSUMING THE DUTIES for this column makes my takeover complete. The New World Order could only hope to be this dominant. The **Eddie Ellner** era is over. Let us usher in the era of Queen Brandi, the all-being, all-knowing mistress of everything that is dark in wrestling.

I will continue with Eddie's format. Frankly, the opportunity to tear into more than one wrestler, promoter, and manager makes my mouth water. There is so much goodness going on, so many do-gooders for me to lambaste. Now settle down, boys, take a cold shower, and enjoy me.

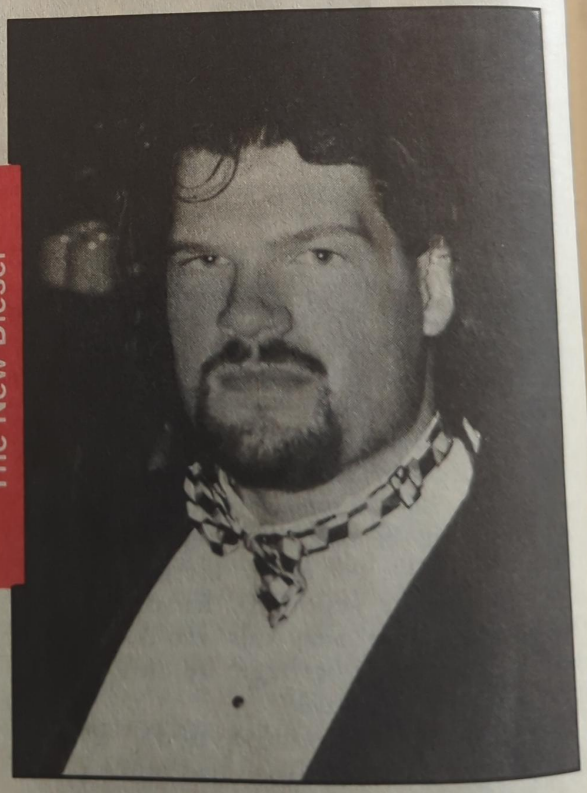
From the It's About Time Dept.: It's nice to see pretty boy **Marcus Bagwell** finally wise up and become a real man. Don't get me wrong. I know that for a lot of women, Bagwell's looks were enough to turn their knees to pudding, but his boy scout outlook made me want to wretch.

How many times could this guy be reinvented? When he teamed with **2 Cold Scorpio**, he was the funkified break-dancer. When he teamed with **The Patriot**, he looked like something that **Hacksaw Duggan** would accidentally blow snot on. Then, with **Scotty Riggs**, he was a Chippendale wannabe. Now he's back to basics. Sure he's reinvented again, but this time, it might stick.

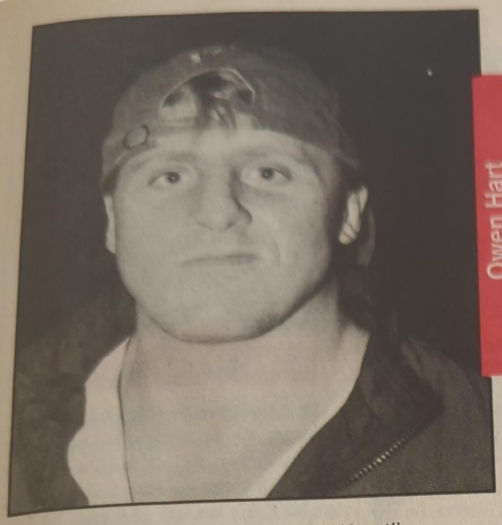
From the Nice Career Move Dept.: What the heck is going on with **Tracey "Freddie Joe Floyd" Smothers** and **Tony "Dirty White Porcelain/T.L. Hopper" Anthony**? Let's see if I understand this. You boys decide to forsake your identities for the bright lights of the WWF. Then you go on losing streaks that would make the 1962 Mets look like World Series contenders. Both of these guys wore title belts and dominated various independent federations.

Hey, Tracey. Go look up your old Southern Boys partner, **Steve Armstrong**. On second thought, don't. I've seen him on WCW TV a few times lately. Note to T.L.: Quit carrying around the plunger. Your career is anything but stopped up. It's going down the drain quickly, and the plunger would only make it worse.

From the Rigor Mortis Possibly Setting In Dept.: It was a quiet Saturday and I was done cleaning between my toes, so I decided to turn on the *AWF*



The New Diesel



Owen Hart

Worriers (I'm sorry, *Warriors*) *Of Wrestling*.

The only thing on the channel where they should have been was an infomercial for hair spray-paint. At first, I thought it was a video vignette on their latest acquisition, free agent **Randy Savage**. Alas, it was not. Looks like, at the very least, my local station stopped running the show. Doesn't look good for the men in gray (as in hair). Now I'll never see **Sgt. Slaughter** (no gray hair, just one brown one) try to win the AWF belt and fit it around that paunch of his. And what about the tag team champs … um … hold on … I know their names … um … um … give me a minute …

From the Mirror Has Four Faces Dept.: Let me get this straight: If **The New Razor Ramon** and **The New Diesel** win the WWF World tag team title, they will be on the same plane as their counterparts, WCW World tag champs **Kevin Nash** and **Scott Hall**. Reminds me of old *Dukes Of Hazzard* reruns in which Coy and Vance took over for Bo and Luke. Eventually they were all put together on the show, but not for long. Originators and imitators on the same level simply do not function together. The differences and disparities become glaring. Hall and Nash are cream that rose to the top long ago.

The counterfeiters are more like the lumps at the bottom of a milk carton dated 1992. But with **Owen Hart** and **Davey Boy Smith** at odds over Bret's ankle, **The Ding Dongs** would stand a chance against them. PseuDiesel and RazorSatz would just be keeping those belts warm for the next champs.

Speaking of the "British Bulldog" …

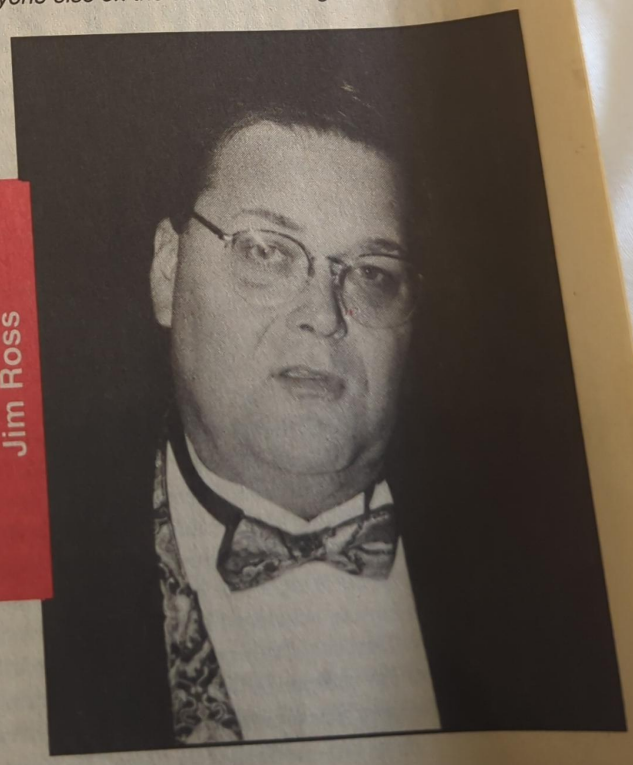
From the International House of Waffling Dept.: Apparently, Davey Boy is having a change of heart. I guess having title shots, title belts, money, and more success than you have ever had is not enough. Now he's more concerned about Bret taking too much punishment from **Steve Austin**.

Gee, Davey, you weren't worried about Bret when you wrestled him for the title less than a year ago with his own sister (your wife) watching the assault. Wise up. You were a mid-carder as a fan favorite. Now you're a mover and a shaker with a hot manager, **Clarence Mason**. Wake up and smell the English tea!

From the Evil Lurks in the Hearts of Executives Dept.: Don't get me wrong. I love the bad "good ol'" J.R. (**Jim Ross**, if you haven't already figured that out), and I'm even okay with the badder **Eric Bischoff**. But how are these front offices supposed to function with men whose hearts are blackened with nefarious intentions? What's next, rulebreaking ring attendants? An evil janitorial staff? Dominant female columnists who are worshipped by men and dabble on the dark side of wrestling journalism? *Hmmmmmm*, I like that idea (whip sound, please).

Until next issue, remember that if you disagree with any of the opinions I have offered here, well, you're just wrong.

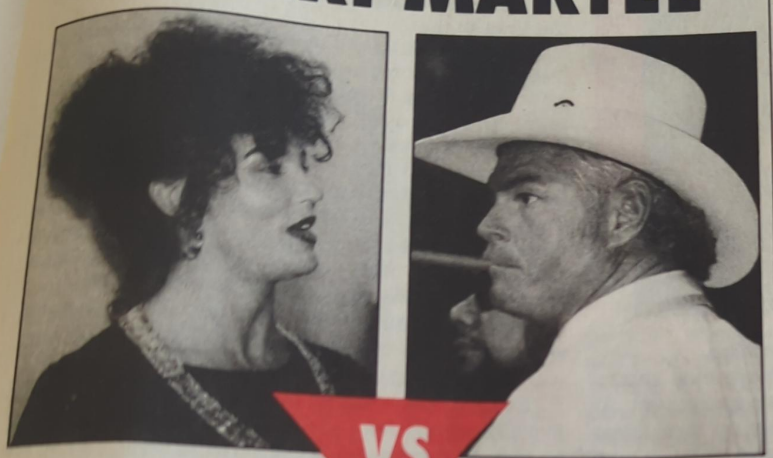
[Editor's note: A lot of us think it's just plain wrong that Brandi has her own column, but she's not about to give it up now, so we all have to deal with it. We also have to remind you that the views expressed in this column are those of Brandi Mankiewicz alone, and they do not necessarily reflect the opinions of anyone else on the staff of this magazine.] □



Jim Ross

Head To Head

SHERRI MARTEL



VS

COL. ROBERT PARKER

Their feud will not exactly elicit comparisons to Sammartino vs. Zbyszko or Flair vs. Race. The conflict between Sherri Martel and Col. Robert Parker has nothing to do with ring superiority or titles. It is not about professional betrayal or a sour business relationship.

No, this one is personal.

Their past "alliance" was more like a courtship. For months, Parker and Martel were an item; they were seen together at ringside and at social events. Their personal relationship created a strain among the wrestlers in their respective stables. But that did not put an end to wrestling's version of ***Romeo And Juliet****. Last year, Martel literally had Parker at the altar of a Las Vegas wedding chapel when Madusa broke up the event and prevented them from tying the knot.*

Things were never the same for the two. Parker began a bizarre in-ring feud with Madusa, and Martel dropped out of sight. When she returned to assist Parker with Harlem Heat, sparks flew again. But after Parker inadvertently assisted Scott Hall and Kevin Nash in their victory over Harlem Heat at Halloween Havoc, the WCW World tag team belts and his relationship with Martel were history.

Now instead of being in each other's arms, they are at opposite ends of the ring. Martel remains with the Heat, while Parker, donned in the garb of the French Foreign Legion, manages The Amazing French-Canadians.

They've gotten into a few tussles this fall.

We're not sure this intergender war qualifies as a great feud, but it's an interesting one. We asked four experts to tell us what they thought might happen if these two ever locked up "Head To Head."

MADUSA

I'm in a unique position. I've faced both of them in the ring. I might only have had a handful of matches with them, but I still think I'm in the best position to determine who'd win. Frankly, I couldn't care less if they tore each other apart, but if my insight is needed, so be it.

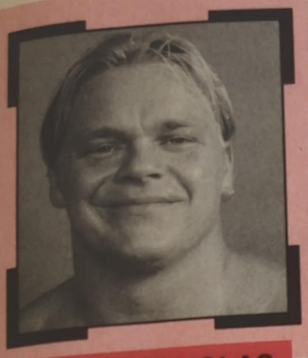
Martel is one of the greatest women wrestlers that I have ever seen. I'll give her credit. She gave me a run for my money a few times, and she probably could still compete today. I also would bet on her beating a lot of tough men. She has that win-at-all-costs attitude. She'll do anything to win matches. Her drive led her to the AWA Women's title, a belt that I held as well.

Parker's no slouch, either. He's had his share of success in wrestling. I faced him after he had a long layoff from the ring. I'll tell you this—he was no pushover. He has a combination of skill and power that surprised me. I thought he might hold back because I'm a woman, but despite his appearance, he does have a killer instinct from his years as a wrestler.

Their match would not resemble a traditional wrestling match. I don't see many armdrags and headlocks from either. Sherri's manic style would probably scare the life out of Parker. He'd be bailing out every chance he got. Parker would have to put aside his Southern gentleman upbringing and try to forget that Sherri is a woman.

I don't see this as your classic battle of the sexes, because few men or women would want these two representing them. Parker would have an advantage in strength and experience, but Sherri wouldn't let him get away with a win. Whether it be a pinfall, countout, or disqualification, Sherri would come out on top.

Former AWA and WWF Women's champ Madusa has feuded with both Sherri and Parker.



SHANE DOUGLAS

Martel vs. Parker. It's always nice to keep up with Sherri's latest antics. She always has a problem falling in love with the men she's around. She could never keep her hands off "The Franchise." But her relationship with Parker? Well, suffice to say that I wouldn't want to be eating while the two of them were kissing on TV.

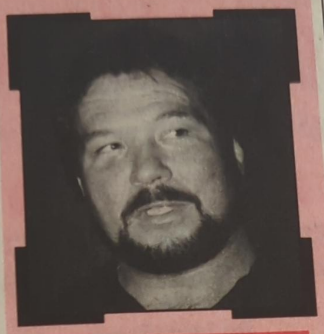
What might be even uglier is a match between the two of them. First of all, neither comes close to the standard that I have developed. Second, it wouldn't be in ECW, so any comparisons to anything "extreme" would be downright ridiculous.

When Sherri gets in the ring, she is nuts, pure and simple. She relies on ferocity and intensity to win matches. Plus, she is deceptively strong. She is not exactly a petite flower. When she was wrestling, she scared both men and women. That's a physical and psychological advantage that's hard for any man or woman to counter.

Parker's got ring rust, that much is for sure. But you can't ignore his track record. And he has made a successful transition to manager. He has passed on his wrestling knowledge to his men, and some of them became champions. That's hard to dispute. With his ring smarts, he could still hold his own against any opponent. He might not win most matches, but he'd hang in there. He could tie Sherri up with an effective ground attack, using more science to counter her insanity.

The bottom line, though, is that not many women—not even Sherri—can beat a man in the ring. Parker is a man and a former wrestler. As much as I admire Sherri's guts, I think he would kick her you-know-what in a New York minute. Give it to Parker by pinfall.

Shane Douglas, currently the ECW TV champion, was once managed by Sherri in ECW.



TED DiBIASE

Why bother a man of my status with such an inane question? Frankly, if this does not involve the New World Order, then I am less than interested. But since I am a man of great knowledge and experience, I will lower myself for this one occasion.

Sherri's decision to manage me was one of the best career moves that anyone could make. She was able to view first-hand my extensive wrestling knowledge. If she would have resumed her wrestling career after managing me, she would have gone right to the top. No woman would have touched her. But you can't deny her past as a women's champion.

Parker intrigues me. Like me, he had a successful wrestling career and has moved on to a managerial career. While he couldn't hold a candle to me as a manager or wrestler, he still has talents. And he can be dangerous, both in and out of the ring. His track record speaks for itself.

This feud has ingredients that could make a match between Sherri and Parker very entertaining. It involves passion, hatred, betrayal, and unrequited love. Personal and professional issues would come into play, and many scores would need to be settled. It probably would take more that one match to do that.

The match wouldn't go very long since neither has been active in a wrestling ring for a long time. But in a short amount of time, they would make even the most vicious brawlers stand up and take notice. Sherri would use everything at her disposal, including her high heels and long fingernails. Parker would have to forget about her gender and tear into her as if she was just another competitor.

Like I stated earlier, these matters have little to do with my mission and that of the NWO, but I will give my verdict. It would be close, but I would give this one to Sherri. Parker is too easily intimidated these days. Sherri has the most to prove as both a wrestler and a manager.

Ted DiBiase, one of the leaders of the New World Order, was briefly managed by Sherri in the WWF.

BUNKHOUSE BUCK

I'll be honest at the outset. People are gonna say, "Buck, you got a bias in this toward Col. Parker because he used to manage you." Well, that ain't exactly true. We didn't see eye-to-eye on everything, especially that thing he had goin' with Sherri, so I can be impartial in this, and I will.

Sherri's tough like a mule. She can mix it up with anyone. She may look pretty and dress nice, but underneath all that glitter is a mean ol' snake of a woman. The outside may look good, but the inside could scare the heck out of you. She has beaten plenty of ladies, but I don't know about men.

The Colonel is a man's man and a good wrestler. He gave me a lot of guidance and helped make me a champion. Not bad for an old ranch hand from Bucksnort, Tennessee. We would spar before my big matches, and I found out right quick that he knows a thing or two about wrestling. He had me tied up in knots sometimes. Plus, he took care of that Madusa and didn't give a dang that she was a woman. Sherri should be afraid of that. He's a gentleman outside of the ring, but inside, he knows that it's survival of the fittest.

In their match, I think the Colonel would just plain try to outwrestle her. If he could get her off her feet, she'd be in big trouble. She would probably just try to scratch and kick her way to victory. But this is wrestling, and no one knows it better than the Colonel. As long as he could keep her in the ring, she wouldn't stand much of a chance. The only way Sherri'd win is if Parker didn't go after her real aggressively right away.

My pick is obvious. I honestly think that the Colonel would take ol' Sherri out to the woodshed and give her the whoopin' that she deserves. The Colonel would win, no doubt about it.

Bunkhouse Buck, who recently returned to WCW, won the WCW World tag team title with Dick Slater under Parker's management in 1995.

Point/Counterpoint

POINT:

WRESTLING PLACES TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON TELEVISION

By Matt Brock

WRESTLING IS IN trouble, and it has television to thank.

The fact of the matter is that it is time for wrestling to get back to basics. And by basics, I am *not* talking about wristlocks and stepover toeholds, although that wouldn't be too bad an idea.

No, I'm talking about remembering the paying customer, the fan in the stands who comes to the arena and spends his hard-earned money to see hard-fought wrestling matches. It is wrestling in the arenas that has always been the mainstay of the sport, and the sport has forgotten that.

Which is why it's in trouble.

So now, the WWF and WCW (and the NWO) battle over tenths of ratings points on Monday nights. And in doing so, the ante has been upped in terms of violence. Don't think so? Even Vince McMahon has admitted that television ratings, that the hunger to provide compelling television, helped color the decision to air the Brian Pillman-Steve Austin gun incident.

Had the WWF not been locked in a ratings war, had Austin not felt that a forum was available for his insanity, then perhaps Pillman's wife wouldn't have had to be frightened beyond description, and perhaps Pillman's children wouldn't have had to be sent out of the home on one very frightening Monday evening in November.

And with the emphasis on television comes a de-emphasis on arena wrestling. Why should a fan want to go to the matches when Monday nights provide the best wrestling available, when pay-per-view events seem to be happening almost weekly?

I'm all for great wrestling on television, but wrestling on TV doesn't begin to compare with wrestling at an arena. It's like trying to eat a photograph of a sandwich rather than the sandwich itself!

Because seeing wrestling live is an experience like no other. You get a better feel for the sport. You understand the interaction of the crowd with the athletes. You get a better sense of the competition between the men in the ring. The sights, the sounds, the smells of the arena ... it's an experience that leads to appreciation and understanding of the grand and glorious mat sport.

Unfortunately, television is sapping that appreciation and understanding away, along with a great deal of the national intelligence. Too bad.

Matt Brock is a contributing editor of WRESTLE AMERICA.

Is there any better way to watch wrestling than to go to the arena and see the action live? Matt Brock doesn't think so. He believes the major federations have lost touch with what made wrestling great in the first place.

There are two sides to every story, and nowhere is that more true than in professional wrestling. Every issue, two of the world's most respected mat journalists will debate an important issue concerning the sport, facing off for an exchange of ideas, leaving the final decision up to YOU!

COUNTERPOINT

WRESTLING'S EMPHASIS *SHOULD* BE TELEVISION

By Liz Hunter

I CAN'T BELIEVE this is even an issue. Wrestling places too much emphasis on television? Wrestling *is* television!

Anyone who knows anything about professional wrestling knows that its success has gone hand-in-hand with television.

In the '50s, when television was a new medium, pro wrestling provided a wealth of programming—and created legendary stars like Gorgeous George and Antonino Rocca.

In the '80s, when cable-television was a growing medium, pro wrestling provided a wealth of programming—and created the monoliths that are now known as WCW and the WWF.

In the '90s, pro wrestling is one of the very few entities on pay-per-view television that is a constant success.

True, nothing can replace the experience of attending the matches in person. But one night of matches does not serve as a reasonable substitute for several weeks of good quality television.

And the fact of the matter is this: It's not as easy to go to the matches as it once was. The WWF and WCW simply don't hold as many live cards as they used to. ECW might make for compelling television (though there are far too many self-promoting commercials and rambling interviews for my taste, and not enough actual wrestling), but how many people who watch ECW regularly are able to attend the matches at the ECW Arena in Philadelphia? A very small percentage, to be sure.

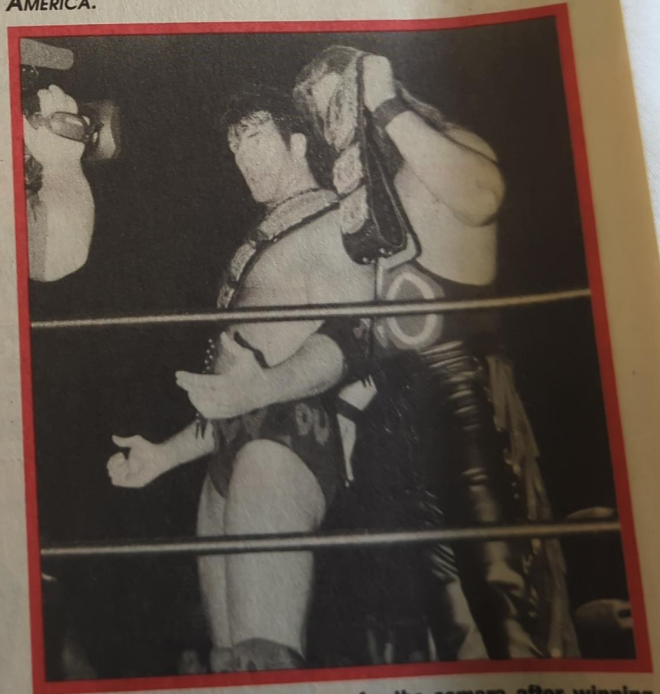
Here's another fact of the matter: The doldrums of the sport that followed the '80s explosion of popular interest have ended. Why?

Television.

Because Monday nights have joined (and in many ways exceeded) Saturday afternoons as the must-watch time for wrestling. Is there a fan alive who has access to cable-TV who doesn't watch *Raw* and/or *Nitro*? Hardly. And the fact that both the WWF and WCW put their best feet forward on Monday nights has made the sport that much more popular across the board. And added popularity means continued growth. And better athletes. And better competition. And better wrestling. And a sport that will thrive and expand.

And that's good for everyone.

Liz Hunter is a contributing editor of WRESTLE AMERICA.



Scott Hall and Kevin Nash pose for the camera after winning the WCW World tag team belts. Liz Hunter argues that more TV exposure has made for better wrestling and enticed more fans to follow the sport.

WCW Ratings

For period ending December 23, 1996

WORLD TITLE

RANKING	M	CI	12-IH	THE SKINNY
1. Hulk Hogan	=	2	1	More defenses, please
2. Roddy Piper	=	1	2	He's no cripple!
3. The Giant	-	5	1	Don't be just a bodyguard
4. Lex Luger	+	6	2	Help us save Sting!
5. Sting	=	21	2	Where is his head?
6. Dallas Page	=	3	6	Too many self-high-fives
7. Lord Steven Regal	=	1	7	Cocky as ever
8. Rey Misterio Jr.	-	2	5	Slipping a bit
9. Dean Malenko	+	2	9	Smile … just once
10. Chris Benoit	+	2	9	What's with Woman?

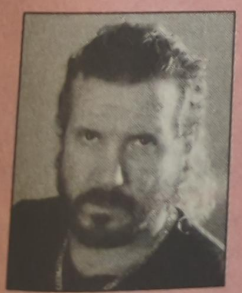
WORLD TAG TEAM

RANKING	M	CI	12-IH	THE SKINNY
1. Hall/Nash	+	2	1	Proud to be uncivilized
2. Meng/Barbarian	+	2	2	Getting better and better
3. Nasty Boys	=	16	1	Loyal to no one
4. Harlem Heat	-	14	1	Cooling off
5. Public Enemy	-	3	2	Injury problems

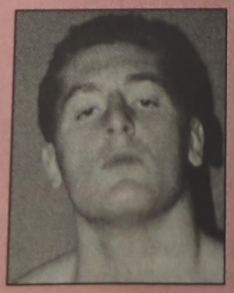
U.S. TITLE

RANKING	M	CI	12-IH	THE SKINNY
1. Eddy Guerrero	+	4	1	One classy wrestler
2. Dallas Page	=	1	2	Watch the attitude
3. Konnan	-	4	1	Get him out of the Dungeon
4. Chris Jericho	+	1	4	Heart of a lion
5. Jeff Jarrett	=	1	5	On his own again

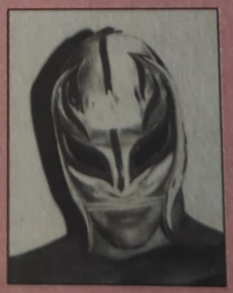
M=momentum; CI=consecutive issues in ratings; 12-IH=12-issue high



Dallas Page

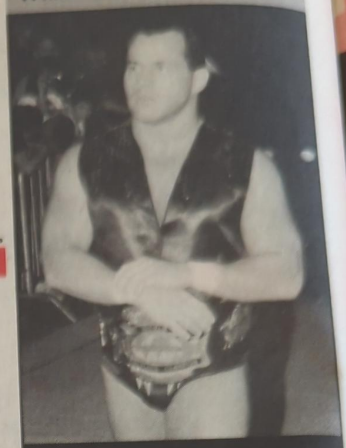


Lord Steven Regal



Rey Misterio Jr.

WRESTLER OF THE MONTH



DEAN MALENKO

He's not a particularly colorful wrestler. He doesn't wear gaudy outfits to the ring. His entrance music is rather boring. He rarely gives extended interviews.

Dean Malenko doesn't care about any of that stuff. All he cares about is wrestling ... and winning. And Malenko has been doing *a lot* of winning lately. Malenko practically guaranteed he'd beat Rey Misterio Jr. for the WCW cruiserweight title at Halloween Havoc, and he did it. Since then, he has been on a tremendous roll. He has beaten Misterio in rematches, Psicosis, and many others.

The scary thing about "The Man Of 1,000 Holds" is that he seems to be wrestling with more confidence now than ever.

"All I care about is what goes on inside that ring," said Malenko. "I spend a lot of time preparing for every single match, and I go into every match fully expecting to win. When the match is over, I start getting ready for the next guy. It's that simple."

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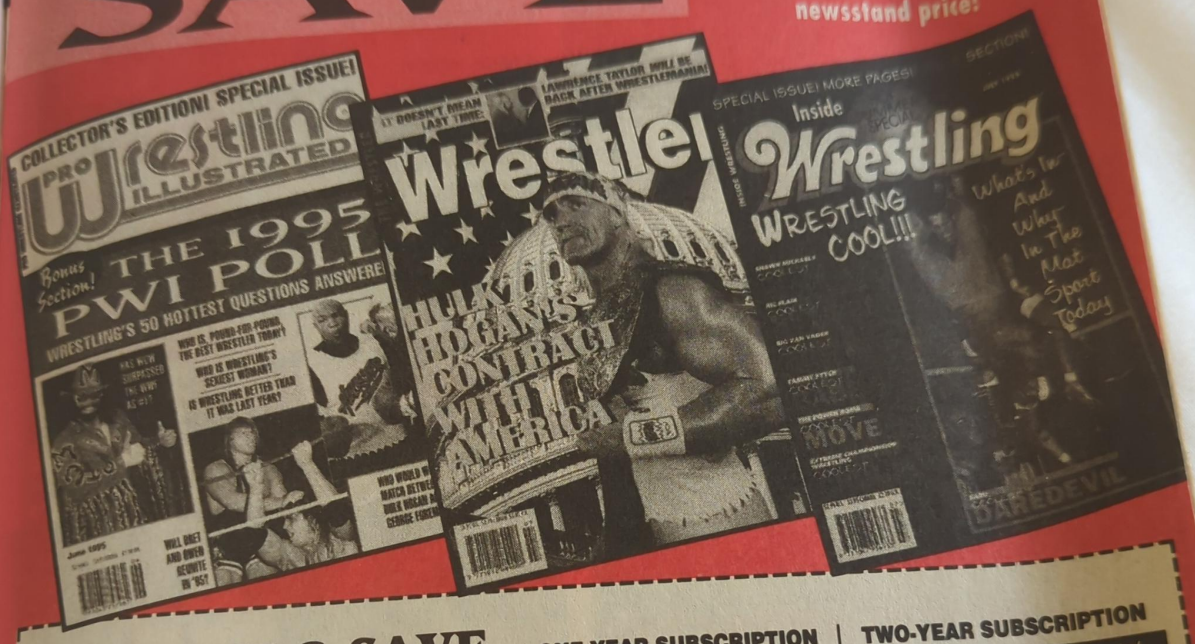

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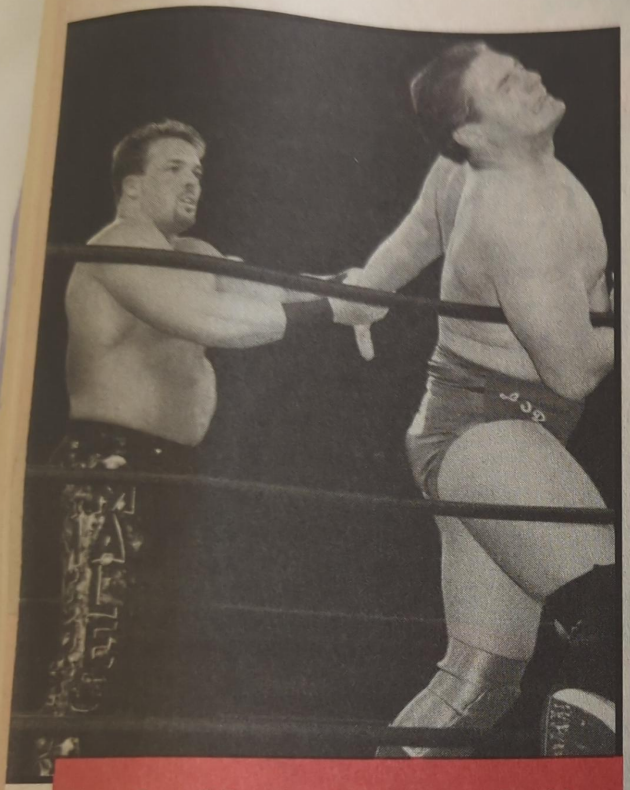
Newsline

WCW

By Andy Rodriguez



Marcus Bagwell (in action against Lord Steven Regal) is an American Male no more. Bagwell was the first man to respond when Eric Bischoff told all WCW wrestlers they had better convert their WCW contracts to NWO contracts.

HAS **ERIC BISCHOFF** gone too far? Yes. Does everyone in WCW realize it yet? No.

When the WCW senior vice president gave every wrestler in the federation 30 days to either convert their WCW contracts to NWO contracts or risk becoming targets of the NWO, he put the wrestling world on notice that he was dead serious in his efforts to make the NWO the sport's preeminent organization. He also put it on notice that he was a very changed man.

"Yeah, he's changed ... for the better!" **Ted DiBiase** asserted. "Hey, it finally dawned on him: If you can't beat 'em, join 'em! **'Hollywood' Hulk Hogan** convinced him he was just wasting his time trying to fight the NWO. Face it: The NWO is unstoppable! The sooner all the people in WCW realize that, the better off they'll be!"

Bischoff won a big convert to his cause when he signed **Marcus Bagwell**. In the process of joining the infamous organization, Bagwell beat up his tag team partner, **Scotty Riggs**.

"Who needs Riggs anymore," said Bagwell, "when I have the NWO?!"

Several weeks later, **Big Bubba**, Scott Norton,

Sting continues to come out of the crowd to attack WCW wrestlers on a regular basis. It doesn't look like he's joining the NWO, but Sting isn't talking to anyone about his status.

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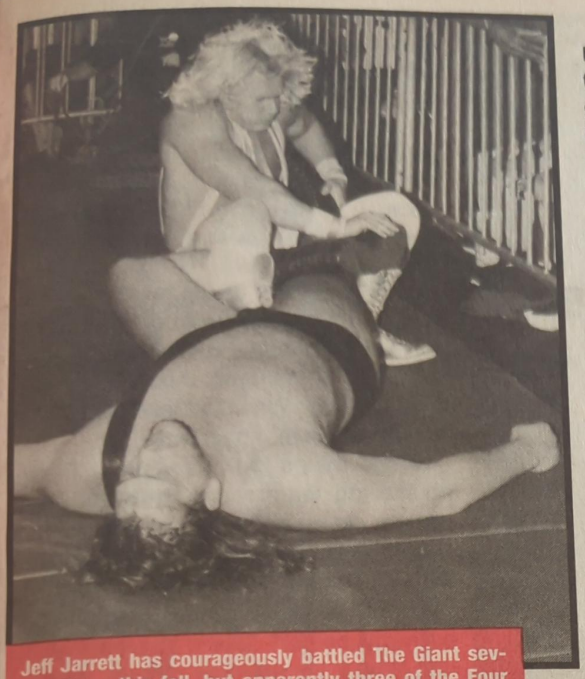


Jeff Jarrett has courageously battled The Giant several times this fall, but apparently three of the Four Horsemen haven't been impressed enough to offer him a position within the group.

M. Wall Street, and **Masa Chono** also made the jump to the NWO.

The NWO could really make waves if it signs **Curt Hennig**, who apparently is headed to WCW in February. At this point, said a source close to Hennig, Curt is determined not to make any promises.

"If and when he does make the move to WCW," the source said, "he'll do it with a completely open mind. The first thing he'll want to do is establish himself. He won't necessarily want to get caught up in any wars right off the bat."

"Man, if someone like Hennig gets a good, close look at the NWO, he'll be paying us to join!" retorted **Scott Hall**, his former tag team partner in the AWA. "He's one of the greatest talents in this sport, and he's a smart man. He's smart enough to know where the action is."

Is **Sting** going NWO, too? Nobody knows. He probably doesn't even know himself. One thing that we do know is that the "Stinger" is a very bitter man. He proved that when he blasted both **Jeff Jarrett** and **Rick Steiner** with DDTs. And when he joined a huge NWO-WCW brawl during the December 16 *Nitro*, he attacked only members of WCW ... but only after they jumped him first.

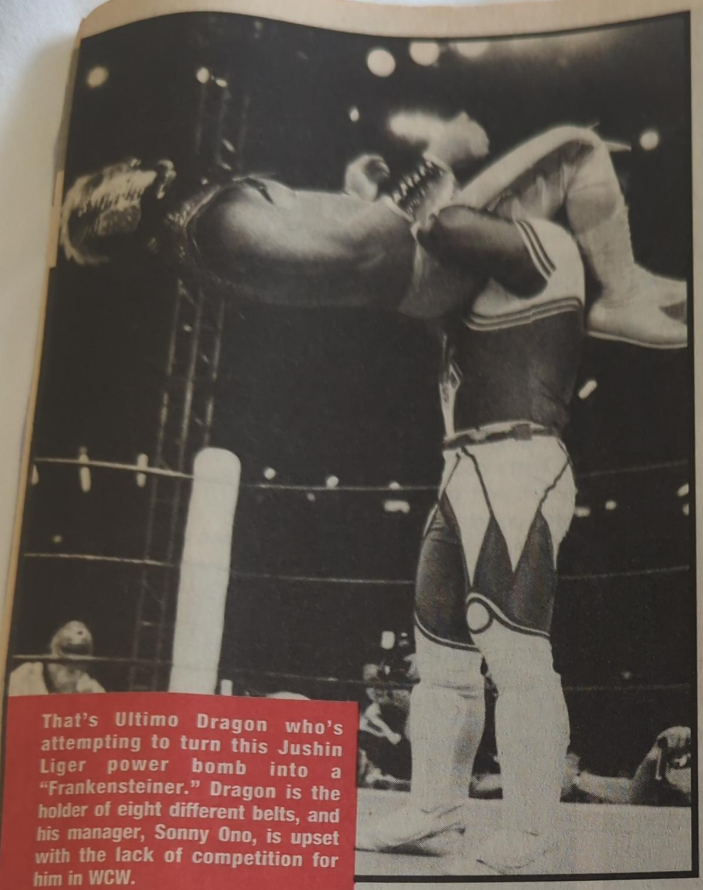
"Hey, I don't know what the whole story is," said Rick Steiner, "but I wish Sting would get his act together in a hurry. He used to be a real standup guy. I still think that, deep down, he wants to get back to his old self, but maybe now it's too late. Boy, I hope not!"

Jarrett was equally shaken by the DDT, but he's more concerned now with his status regarding **The Four Horsemen**. It appears he won't be joining the elite gang, given that **Arn Anderson** and **Chris Benoit** don't want him (Steve McMichael said he'd go along with anything his wife, Debra, wants.

"That's fine with me," Jarrett said. "I don't need them. I could have really strengthened them, but that's their loss. But how come **Ric Flair** hasn't said anything bad about me? I don't think the Horsemen are as united as they claim to be."

That's certainly true. Just look at the situation with Benoit and **Woman**. Anderson and McMichael have been grumbling very loudly about how Woman cares a lot more about Benoit than she does about the rest

What's going on with Chris Benoit and Woman? They've been spending a lot of time alone together, away from the other Horsemen. Others in the group are beginning to doubt whether these two are good team players.



That's Ultimo Dragon who's attempting to turn this Jushin Liger power bomb into a "Frankensteiner." Dragon is the holder of eight different belts, and his manager, Sonny Ono, is upset with the lack of competition for him in WCW.

of the group. Benoit and Woman spent a lot of time alone together during WCW's tour of Germany in December.

"She needs to start acting like a Horseman," said McMichael. "My wife, the lovely **Debra**, isn't here for just me, and Woman shouldn't be here for just Benoit!"

"I don't know what all the complaining's about," Benoit responded. "We've said time and time again that we're completely committed to the Horsemen. She's still helping the whole group."

Jimmy Hart wants nothing to do with the Horsemen mess. He's thrilled with the success of his tag team, **The Faces Of Fear**. Could **Meng** and **The Barbarian** bring "The Mouth Of The South" tag team glory once more?

"Baby, this is the meanest, toughest, best team I've ever assembled!" Hart boasted in typical style. "They'd be World champions already if Hall and Nash weren't so afraid of them! But we'll get those belts somehow, and then their true greatness will come out!"

Hart isn't the only manager feeling good about tag teams these days. **Col. Robert Parker** says he thinks his new team, **The Amazing French-Canadians**, are also destined for the top.

"Until I got my hands on those boys, they hadn't been realizing their full potential," claimed Parker. "It's taking my very special managerial genius to show them the way. We could take Hart's boys with no problem, I guarantee!"

While things look peachy for Parker on the tag team scene, he's still faced with an old nemesis: **Sherri Martel**. Now Parker's ex-girlfriend is challenging the manager to a mixed match.

"I want to prove to the world just how pathetic he is!" Sherri roared. "In the ring, I'm a world-class athlete, and he, for all his talk, is absolutely nothing! And if he tries to use those Canadians to save his butt, I've got friends of my own to take care of that!"

Kimberly, the former **Diamond Doll** and **Booty Babe**, might be headed back to WCW, this time as a broadcaster ... Her old boss, **"Diamond" Dallas Page**, continues to tell anyone who'll listen that he thinks the NWO should have offered him a contract a long time ago and that he now has no plans to join the group ... **David Sammartino** is now competing in the federation, and says he's content for now to be a mid-level competitor.

WCW is the new home to **Ultimo Dragon**, holder of eight (yes, eight!) junior heavyweight, welterweight, and light heavyweight titles. He's one of the most talented grapplers in Japanese mat history. He also has a manager, **Sonny Ono**, who says that if Dragon doesn't get some "real competition" soon, he'll head back to Japan.

"All these Mexican wrestlers here—they don't impress us!" Ono scoffed. "Do you know what eight championships means? It means Dragon has faced and defeated every kind of wrestler there is! We came to WCW to show Americans what the rest of the world already knows, but we cannot yet show them what we are fully capable of!"

I can hear **Dean Malenko** growling from here. □

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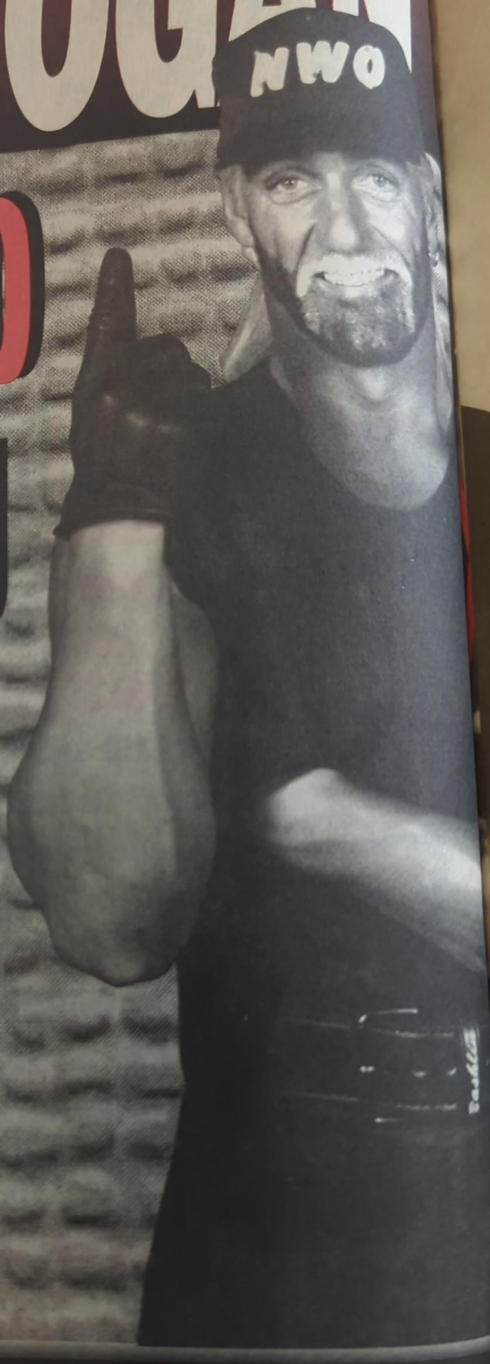
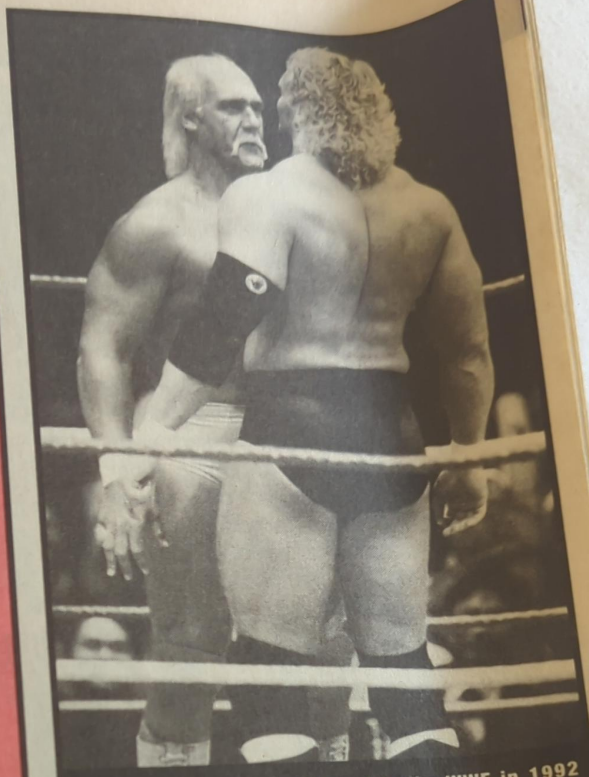


"The NWO Is Taking Over The WWF Next!"

"NWO for life!" is Hulk Hogan's favorite catch-phrase these days, but what happens if WCW is overrun by the NWO? Would the NWO seek to overrun other promotions . . . like one based in Connecticut, perhaps? We asked Hogan himself!



Remember the Hogan-Sid feud in the WWF in 1992 (above)? How about the Hogan-Vader wars in WCW in 1995 (below)? What if Hogan the NWO leader went after either or both again ... this time in an invasion of the WWF?

By Steve Anderson

WHEN HULK HOGAN, Kevin Nash, and Scott Hall laid the foundation for the New World Order, most looked upon it as just another wrestling supergroup. They'd succeed for a while, but all those overpowering egos would clash eventually.

Same old same old, right?

Maybe not this time.

Now, nearly six months later, the NWO is stronger and more dominant than any other "clique" in wrestling. They have dealt with all

the little problems that have come up within the group and seemingly emerged stronger than ever.

The Four Horsemen and Dungeon of Doom are merely assemblages of wrestlers. The NWO is proving to be much more than a supergroup. Even more than a super supergroup. By taking over a 100-year-old promotion, the NWO is close to becoming its own wrestling organization.

And if Eric Bischoff has its way, it will.

One only needs to look at the group's acquisitions and the sheer timing of those signings to see the frightening progression to dominance. Just as WCW was starting to get the upper hand back in September, Hogan and company signed The Giant away. When Roddy Piper burst onto the WCW scene, the NWO responded by revealing that WCW Senior Vice President Bischoff had actually been on its side for quite some time.

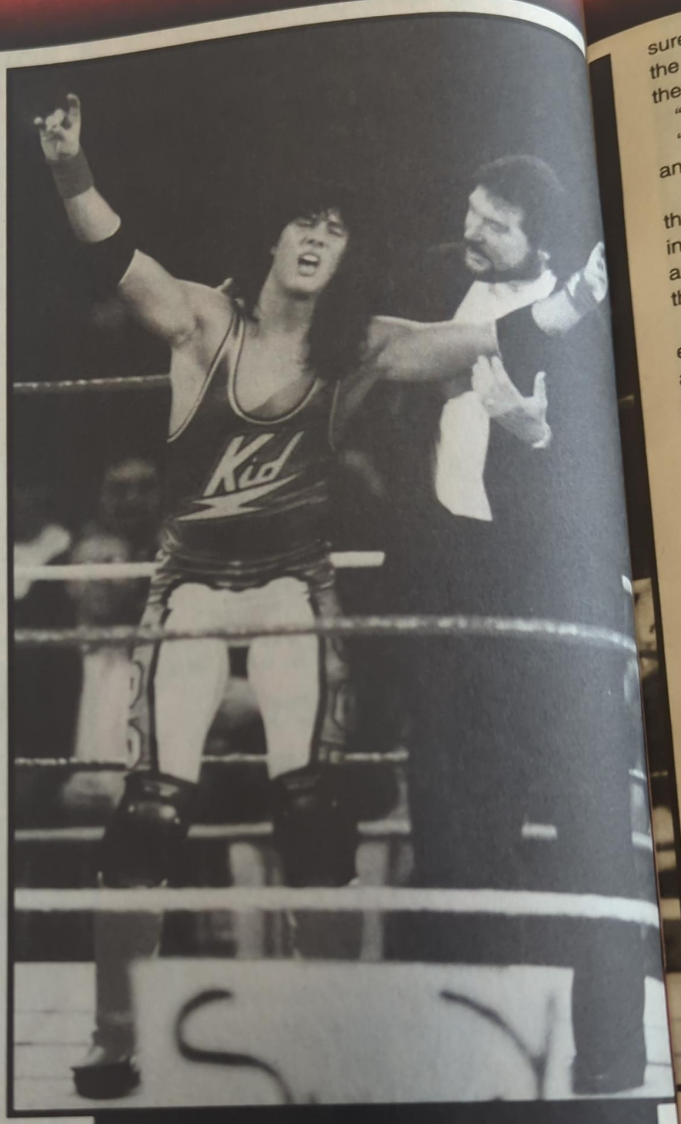
For every WCW action, there has been an opposite, but unequal reaction by the NWO. It's as if Hogan, Bischoff, and friends are taunting WCW and saying, "Anything you do, we can and will do better." The NWO has taken over WCW locker rooms, front office positions, and TV programs. What's next, guys?

NWO press conferences used to be makeshift affairs. They would be held in hotel conference rooms or in the backs of arenas. But during the last few months, they have turned into more and more elaborate events. Of course, the most eagerly anticipated moment of every NWO press conference comes when the crown jewel, WCW World champion Hulk Hogan, addresses the journalistic masses.

Just about every time Hogan talks to the media, he is asked what his plans are. He never tires of the question, either, because it provides him with an opportunity to gloat about his future ambitions as they relate to the hostile takeover of WCW. But what he said after one edition of *Monday Nitro* was positively stunning.

"You've got Bischoff now. You're more powerful than ever. So let's assume you do take over WCW ... or wipe it out," a reporter said. "What happens then? Do you do the same to the WWF?"

Hogan paused. Then a twinkle came into his eye as he broke into a wide smile. "Why not?" he responded. "After all, WCW is on life support. You can go ahead and write the obituary now. If we ever get the chance,



Wherever the NWO goes, supporters come out in force (opposite right). Six, the former 1-2-3 Kid, and Ted DiBiase (above) would probably love a chance to humiliate their former employer.

sure. I like the sound of that. The NWO is taking over the WWF next! Who can stop us? With the strength of the NWO, no federation is safe, brother."

"You're not kidding?"

"If the opportunity was there, brother, we'd take over anything!"

It's not as farfetched as it might sound. Of course, the WWF would have to initially open the door to the invasion, just as WCW did. But that might be as simple as the NWO issuing an open challenge and waiting for the WWF to succumb to public pressure.

The WWF has spent the past few years trying to erase the history that Hogan made. References to him are not exactly glowing, and no one goes out of his way to label him one of the greatest champions the federation ever had, even though he undoubtedly is. Vince McMahon even went so far as to commission the "Billionaire Ted" skits that portrayed Hogan as a doddering, over-the-hill wrestler. Privately, Hogan took exception. If Hogan was fed up with WCW, you can imagine how he feels about his former employer.

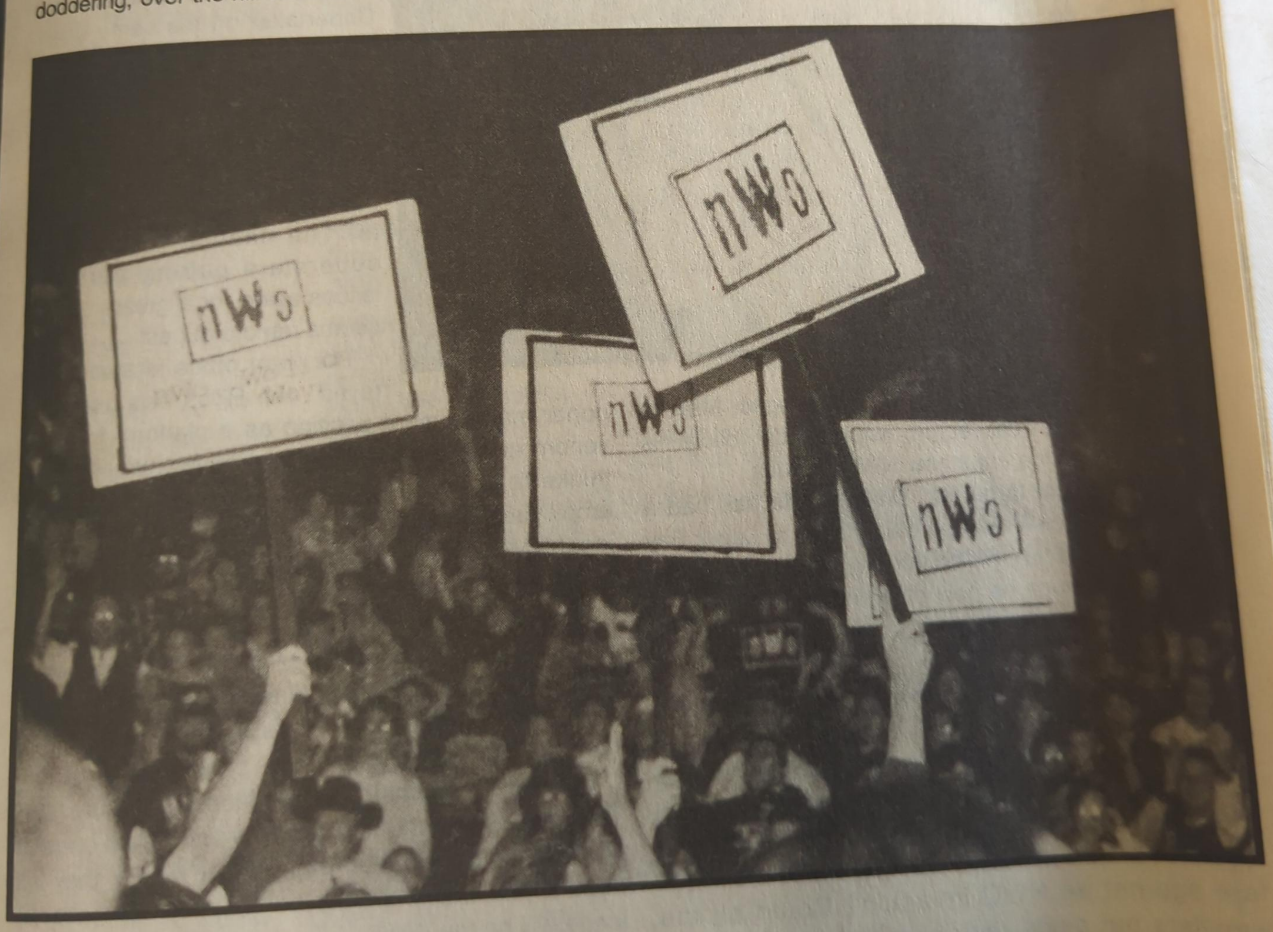
Kevin Nash and Scott Hall would probably welcome a WWF invasion as well. How better to prove the inadequacies of The New Diesel and The New Razor Ramon than to confront them—and pound them?

"Whatever 'Hollywood' wants to do, we'll gladly follow," said Nash.

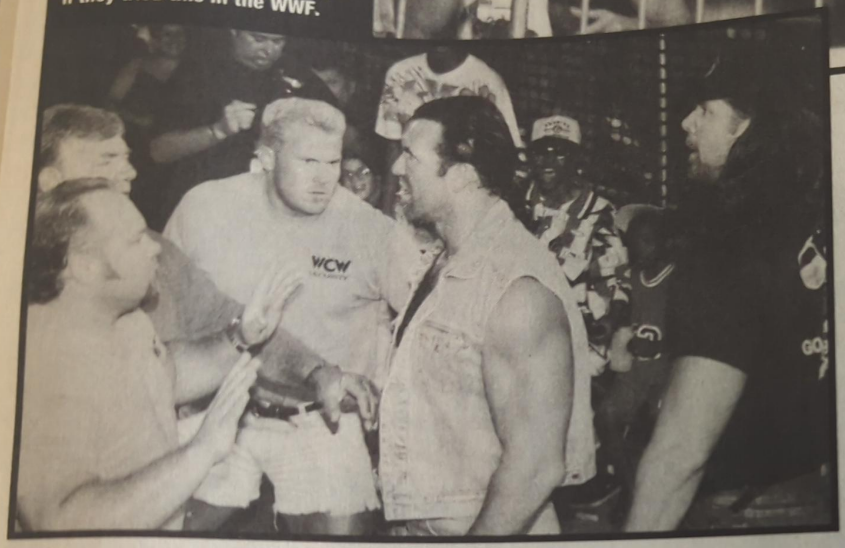
Ted DiBiase left the WWF in utter humiliation when his former charge "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin lost to Savio Vega in a Caribbean strap match in May. He shook up the WWF nearly 10 years ago by attempting to buy the World title. His lack of respect for the WWF establishment coupled with his vast wealth make the money man of the NWO extremely dangerous.

"We have the resources to do whatever we want," he said.

Six and Vincent would also have issues. The Giant has choke-slammed most of the top stars in WCW, so



Scott Hall and Kevin Nash have enjoyed watching WCW shows from the stands on occasion (right), and they get an even greater thrill out of harassing security guards (below). Just imagine the reaction they'd get if they tried this in the WWF.



he would surely welcome new challenges. Marcus Bagwell, the newest recruit, would gladly follow his pals. So would the other new NWO recruits.

And let us not forget Mr. Bischoff. He has had a rivalry with Vince McMahon dating back to Labor Day 1995, when the first *WCW Monday Nitro* aired live on TNT. Even though he now pledges his allegiance to the NWO, he still has a score to settle with McMahon.

What seems unlikely at first blush is now highly plausible.

What has made WCW susceptible to takeover is its lack of unity. The infighting amongst rulebreakers and fan favorites and various cliques has left the promotion in a state of upheaval. How would the WWF fare against an NWO invasion? Could all the wrestlers put aside their differences and stand together under one banner? Could you see Mankind and The Undertaker on the same side? Steve Austin and Bret Hart? Hunter Hearst Helmsley and Marc Mero? Big Van Vader and "Psycho" Sid?

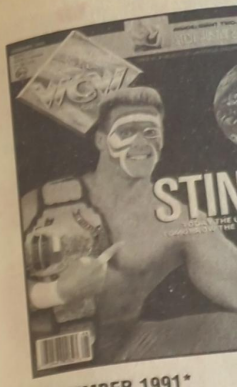
The WWF might be more vulnerable to a takeover than WCW is. The chance of all these superstars putting personal issues aside for a greater cause seems remote at best.

The front office is also splintered. Jim Ross has used his upper management position as a platform to spew venom at Vince McMahon and recruit wrestlers he thinks fit in well. McMahon is busy fending off his employees' insubordination. If the NWO came calling, McMahon would likely lack the control necessary to combat the insurgence.

The NWO is by no means looking past WCW *right now*, though. That takeover is far from complete. Yes, the group is tremendously strong, but it needs more than a few ex-WWFers, ex-WCWers, a rich backer, and a clever senior vice president.

But Hogan, Bischoff, and DiBiase are greedy men. The more they get, the more they want. And once all of WCW is at their feet, begging for mercy, they will need a new challenge. Maybe, just maybe, that challenge will be the WWF.

As Hogan said, "Why not?" □



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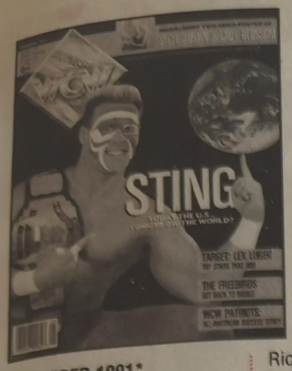

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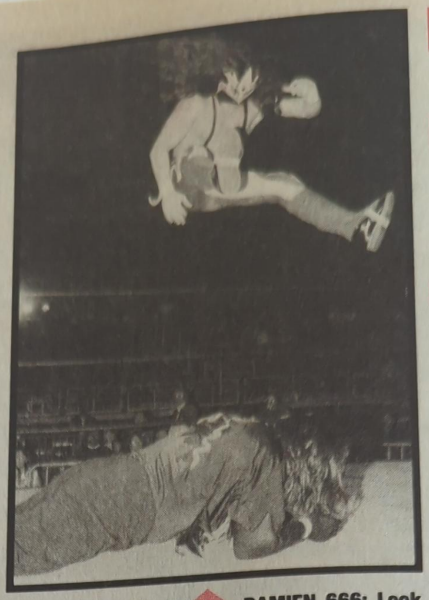
Focus on...

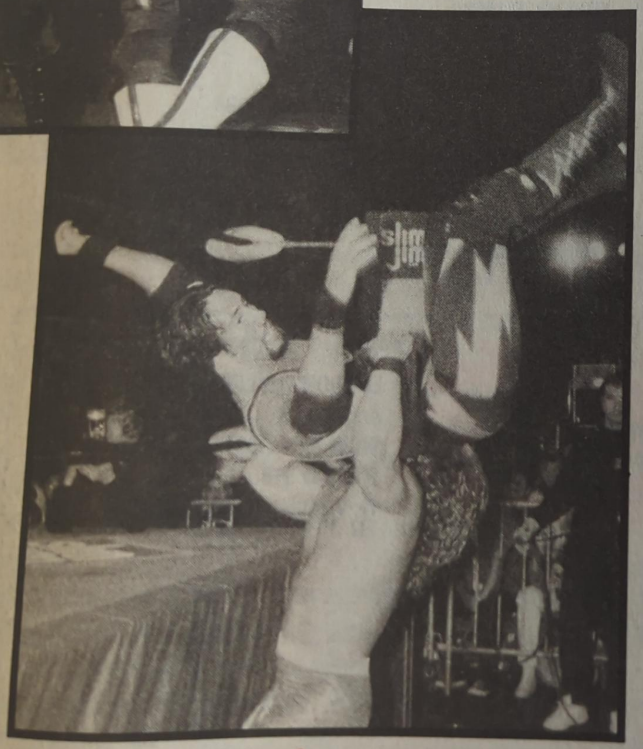
WCW

Photos by Bill Apter

DALLAS PAGE vs. EDDY GUERRERO: "Diamond" Dallas always has a smile on his face when his opponent is in pain. Guerrero was definitely hurting from this wristlock.



JUVENTUD GUERRERA vs. DAMIEN 666: Look out below! When Guerrera comes off the top rope with a legdrop, he gets some serious height on the move. Damien was fortunate to only get hit in the back.



SIX vs. CHRIS JERICHO: Six can't get through any match without executing at least one or two high-risk maneuvers. This over-the-top-rope dive caught "Lion Heart" off-guard.

REY MISTERIO JR. vs. JIMMY GRAFFITI: You have to be quick if you're even going to stand a chance of keeping up with Misterio. Graffiti moved very fast as Misterio spun him around with this flip.

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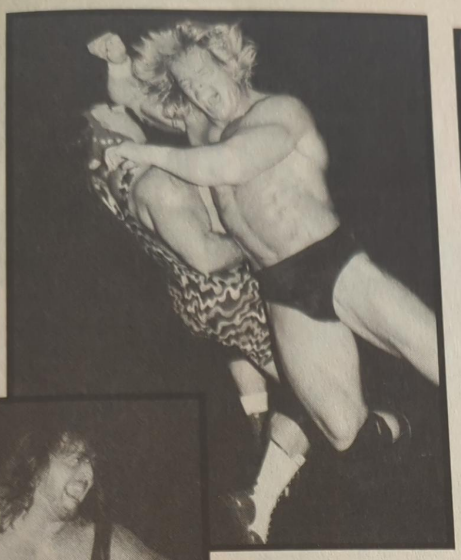
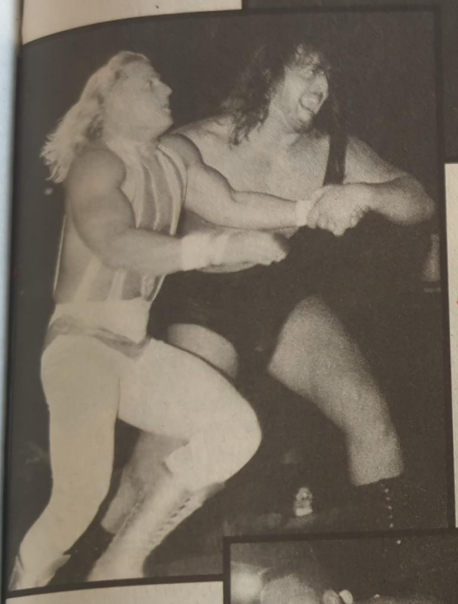
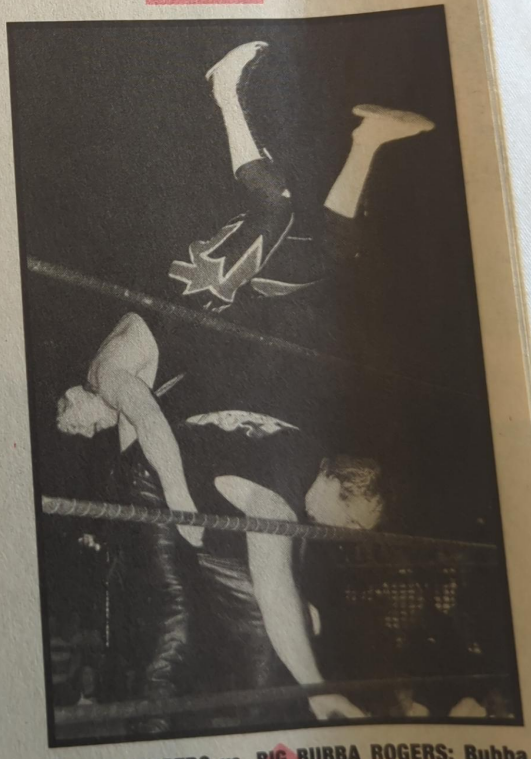


LEX LUGER vs. RICK STEINER: There is never anywhere to go but down when Luger catches you with that elbow to the face. That's the direction in which Steiner was sent.

BOOKER T vs. LEX LUGER: Booker surprised Luger with this side suplex. Lex is arguably the strongest man in WCW, but his strength couldn't help him avoid this move.



THE GIANT vs. JEFF JARRETT: Can you blame Jarrett for looking a little nervous while getting whipped into the ropes by this 7'4", 430-pound monster with a bad attitude?

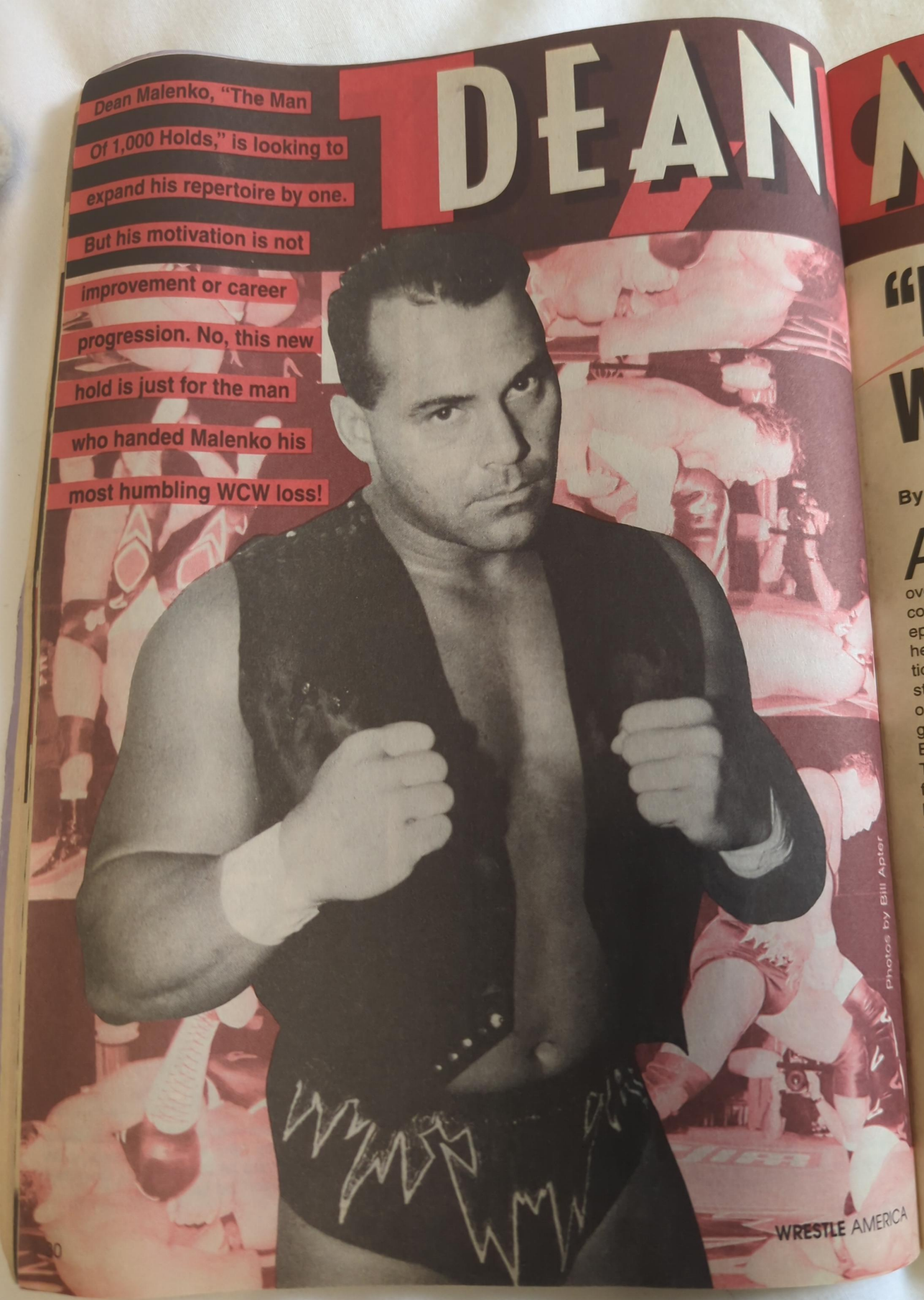


EDDY GUERRERO vs. BIG BUBBA ROGERS: Bubba tried and tried and tried to get his hands on the ropes when Guerrero hit him with this sensational sunset flip. The effort did not pay off.

KEVIN NASH & SCOTT HALL vs. HARLEM HEAT: Booker T doesn't look all that thrilled to be getting set up for a bodyslam by Nash. It's hard to blame him. When Nash executes a slam, he puts all of his 300-plus pounds into it.

DEAN MA

Dean Malenko, "The Man Of 1,000 Holds," is looking to expand his repertoire by one. But his motivation is not improvement or career progression. No, this new hold is just for the man who handed Malenko his most humbling WCW loss!



Photos by Bill Apter

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MALENKO:

"My 1,001st Hold Will Destroy Rey Misterio!"

By Steve Anderson

AT LEAST A handful of wrestlers have been called "The Man Of 1,000 Holds" over the years, but Dean Malenko comes as close as anyone to truly epitomizing that moniker. Although he is still considered a new sensation in WCW, Malenko spent years struggling his way out of obscurity. Years after he gained fame in Japan, ECW came calling. There, he gave American fans the first taste of his high-impact, no-frills wrestling style.

"Remember who trained me," said Malenko. "My father—the great Boris Malenko. He taught me that if you're limited in the ring, you'll be limited in your victories."

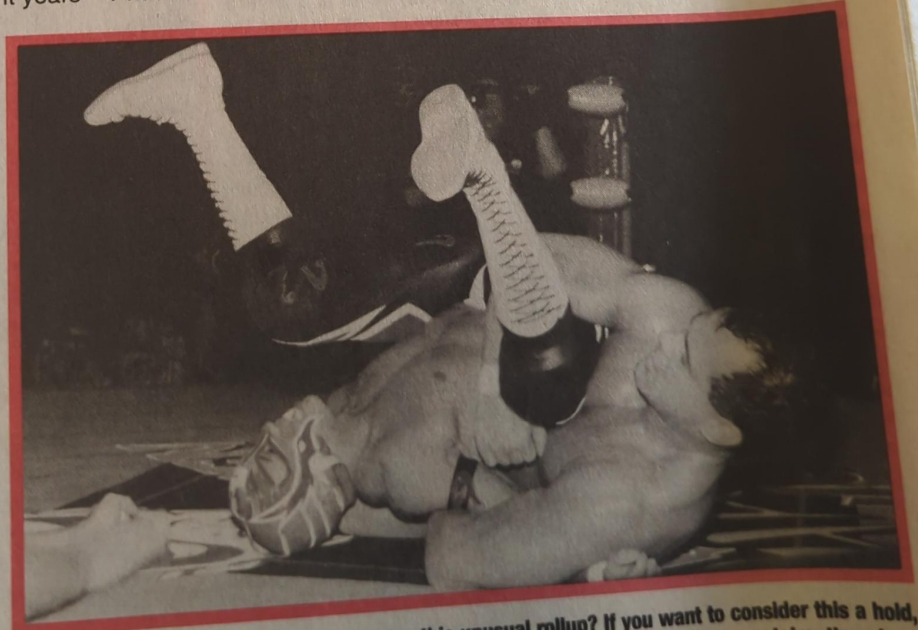
When he finally had the chance to compete under the bright lights of WCW, Malenko turned into a shining star. When the cruiserweight title tournament was set up, Malenko was one of the first to enter. Although he did not secure the belt then, he was confident he would find his way back to it.

He did, just six weeks after Shinjiro Otani beat Chris Benoit in a tournament final.

"Doubt weakens a man," said Malenko. "Just as I trust my skills, I had to trust that the path I was taking would lead me to that belt."

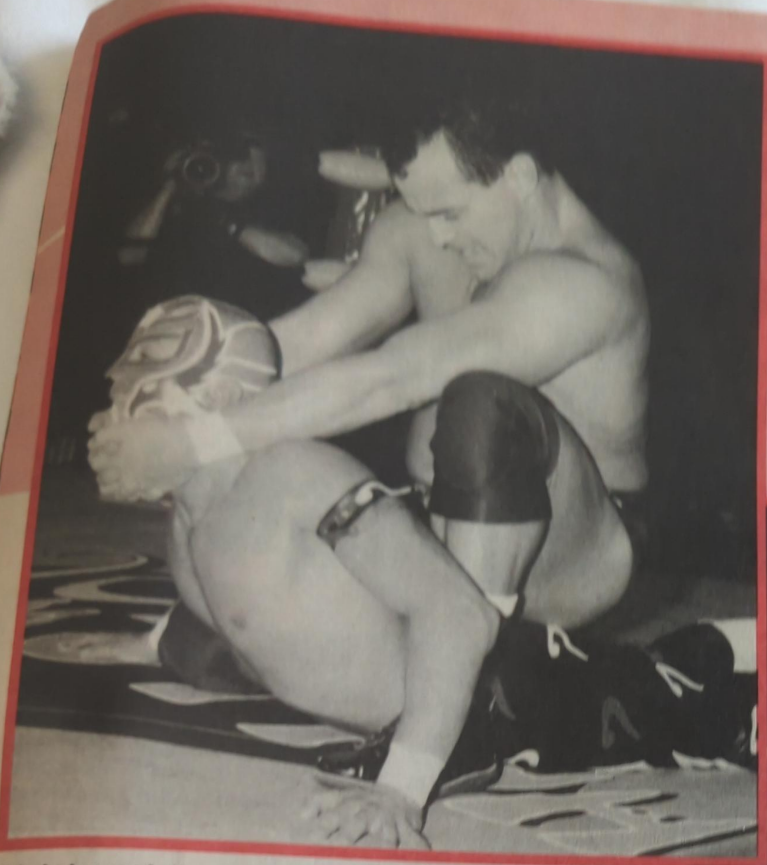
What helped him win that title is the sheer number of holds and moves that he can flawlessly execute. If there is a move that he hasn't learned yet, he will learn it. If there is a move he hasn't heard of, then it's probably not a real move after all.

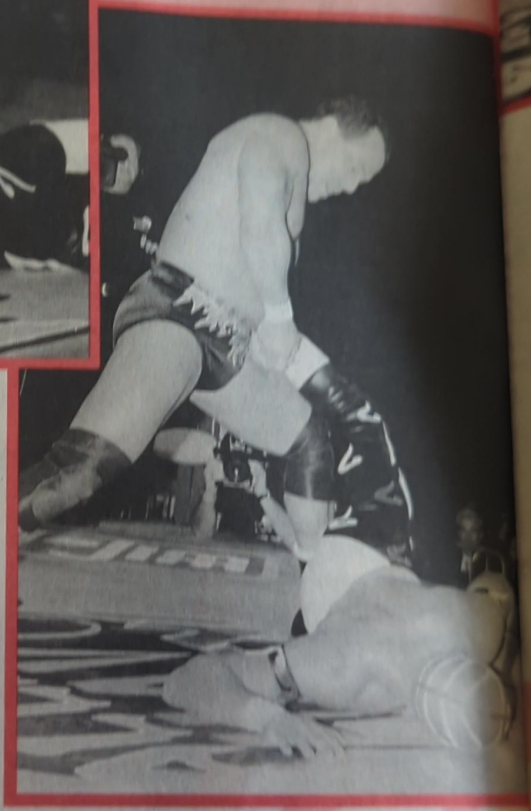
"During training, you could call



How many men can pin another man using this unusual rollup? If you want to consider this a hold, it's one of the 1,000 or so Dean Malenko knows. He's hardly content with his repertoire, though.

Photos by Bill Apter





Malenko has used all sorts of submission holds on Misterio. He's just as likely to lock on a modified camel clutch (above) as he is a leglock (right). But he says he has an even more dangerous hold in mind for Misterio now.

out moves from Mexico, Japan, and Europe," said his former tag team partner Chris Benoit. "Dean would execute them almost immediately. He processes moves like a computer. It's scary sometimes."

But Malenko is more than just n encyclopedia of wrestling holds nd moves. He is a soft-spoken an with passion for the profeson that he has chosen. And hen someone embarrasses him th a defeat and puts into ques- his vast skills, Malenko silently ethes... and develops an almost ealthy obsession with revenge. Rey Misterio Jr. dealt Malenko first significant setback in W when he beat him for the cruiserweight belt on the July 8 *WCW Monday Nitro*. Malenko immediately became obsessed with regaining the belt. He even went so far as to steal Misterio's mask and taunt him with it. That brought about the Halloween Havoc rematch that resulted in Misterio losing his title to his foe. Malenko was satisfied. He had his title back.

But he wasn't finished with Misterio.

Most champions would move on to the next contender and stay away from the wrestler who was able to beat them. Not Malenko. He'll issue challenges to anyone, but Misterio is special. Malenko is on a mission to end his career.

In each one of his matches, he carefully selects one move or a series of moves based on the situation and the opponent. But for Misterio, he is saving something special, something new.

"My 1,001st hold will destroy Rey Misterio!" he said. "I'm working on something that will do more than cause him to submit. This one is beyond dangerous, and he's never seen anything like it."

Malenko has remained tight-lipped about this Misterio-motivated hold. But why would Malenko want to wrestle a man that he already vanquished? Why take the chance? Why not move on?

"Misterio holds something over me that few man have," said Malenko. "I can't allow him to go on with his career knowing that he

Misterio tries to avoid cloverleaf. Since he sh probably safe to assu about is not another le

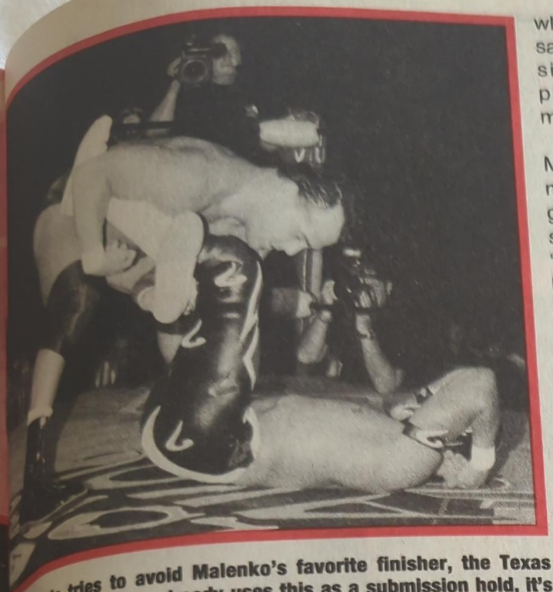
beat me, that he th than me, smarte man builds a expense."

But what is new hold?

"The world will it when I'm res Malenko respon "And you can c on it coming match with Miste

When word s of Malenko's i tions toward Mi the young Me star was, to s least, perplexed always prided on showing sportsmanship

Misterio was counter Malenko's at a back-body Halloween Havo but he couldn't power bomb (f He's not sure he' find a counter new hold, beca not sure it exists



Misterio tries to avoid Malenko's favorite finisher, the Texas cloverleaf. Since he already uses this as a submission hold, it's probably safe to assume that this 1,001st hold Malenko talks about is not another leglock.

when I lose," he said. "His obsessions are his problem, not mine."

When told of Misterio's comments, Malenko grimaced and shook his head. "*My* problem?" he said. "*My* problem? When I get through with him, he'll have more problems than he can handle."

Our problem is trying to figure out what this new hold is. He's already using the Texas cloverleaf as a finisher, so it's probably not another leglock. It could be just about anything else, though.

Then again, there might be no new hold at all. Not only is Malenko a master technician, he is also a master of psychological warfare. He enters the ring expressionless, refusing to give any indication of his emotional state. That focus, intensity, and lack of distraction makes him dangerous, both psychologically and physically. This 1,001st hold could be nothing more than a distraction, a psychological ploy.

With that threat hanging over his head, Misterio could be waiting for Malenko to execute his new hold and forget about the 1,000 others. But chances are, given Malenko's vast talents, he has something in mind. And what he has in mind could cost Misterio a win, another cruiserweight title, and perhaps even his career.

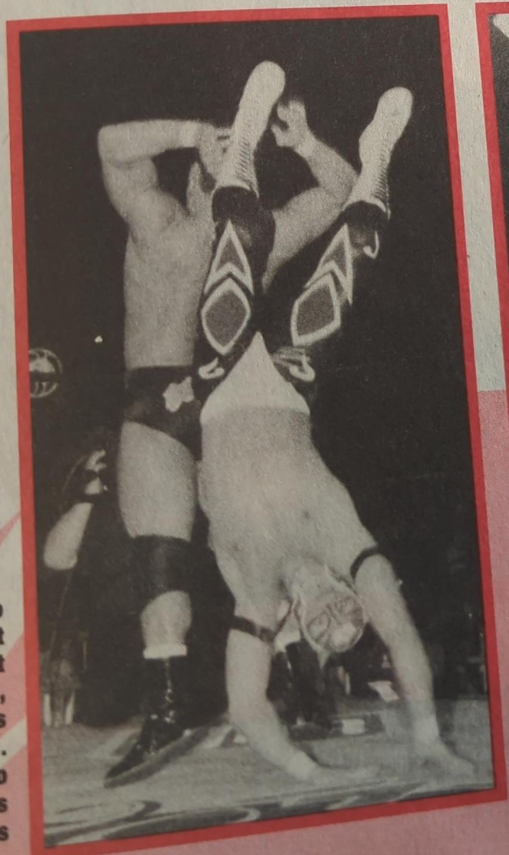
Malenko remains determined and ominous in his threats. "Misterio might think I'm bluffing," he said, "but does he really want to take that chance?" □

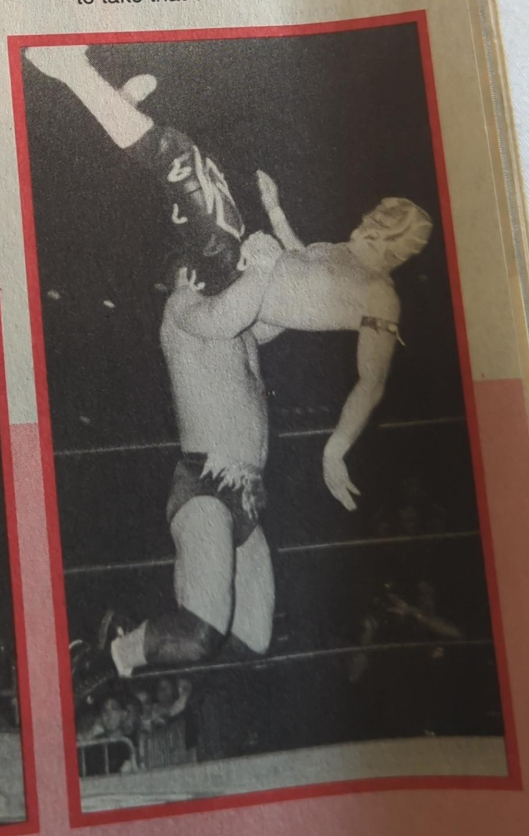
beat me, that he thinks he's better than me, smarter than me. No man builds a career at my expense."

But what is this new hold?

"The world will see it when I'm ready," Malenko responded. "And you can count on it coming in a match with Misterio."

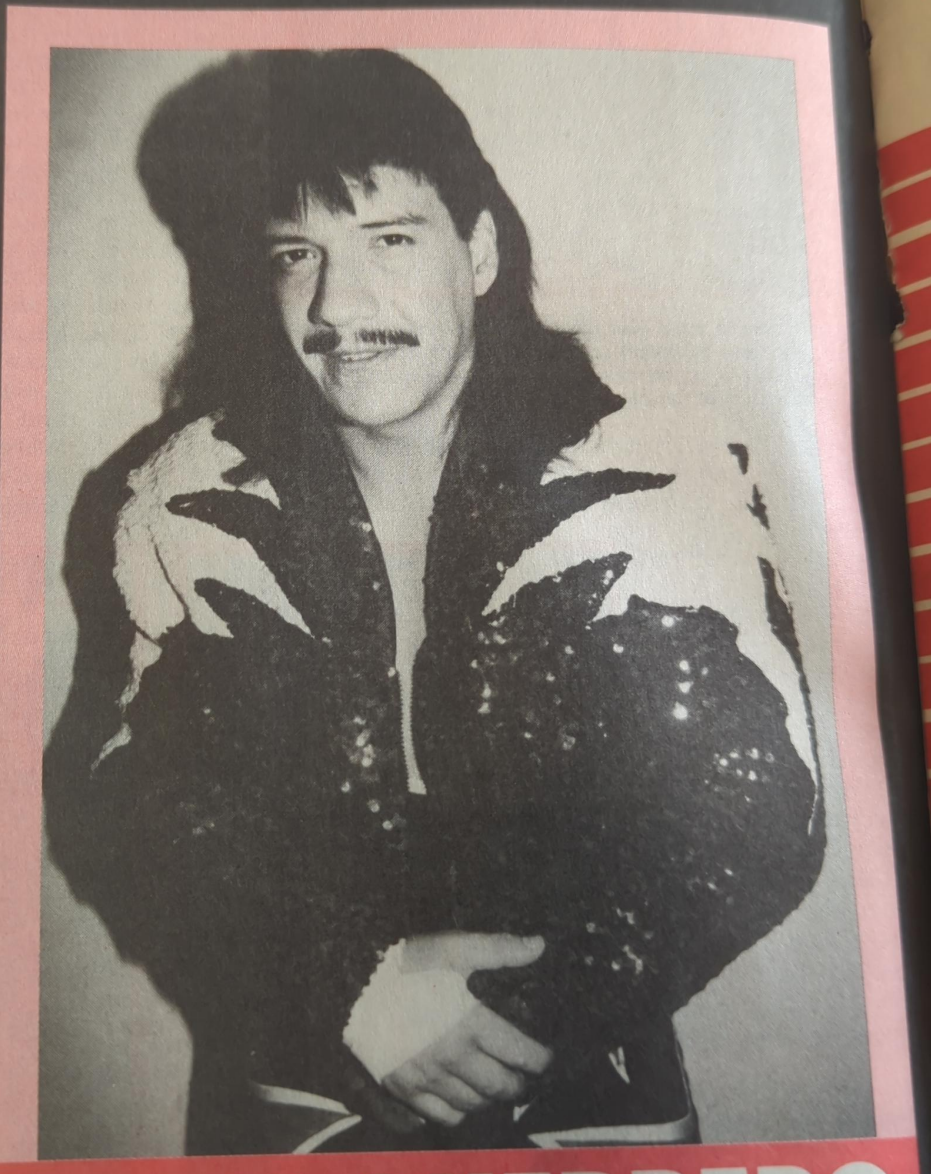
When word spread of Malenko's intentions toward Misterio, the young Mexican star was, to say the least, perplexed. "I've always prided myself on showing good sportsmanship, even





Misterio was able to counter Malenko's attempt at a back-bodydrop at Halloween Havoc (right), but he couldn't avoid his power bomb (far right). He's not sure he'll need to find a counter for this new hold, because he's not sure it exists.

WCW Data Bank



EDDY GUERRERO

HEIGHT: 5'8"
WEIGHT: 231
HOMETOWN: El Paso, TX
MAJOR TITLES HELD: ECW TV (1995, twice); AAA tag team (with Love Machine, 1994); WWA trios tag team (with Chavo and Mando Guerrero, 1989)
BIGGEST STRENGTH: A great combination of mat and aerial skills that he honed in Mexico and Japan
BIGGEST WEAKNESS: Susceptible to back and rib injuries
FAVORITE MANEUVER: "Jackknife" top-rope splash
CLOSEST ALLY: Chavo Guerrero Jr. (his nephew)
MOST HATED OPPONENT: "Diamond" Dallas Page
BIGGEST MATCH: Pinned "Diamond" Dallas Page to win Page's Battlebowl ring, August 15, 1996
IMMEDIATE GOAL: Help WCW win the war with the NWO in any way he can
LONG-RANGE GOAL: Contend for the WCW World title
HE SAID IT: "I'd rather give up wrestling than compete under the NWO banner!"

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SPRING 1997

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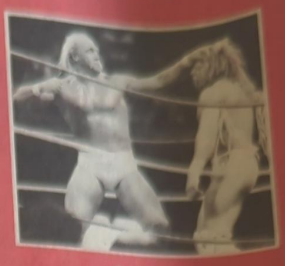

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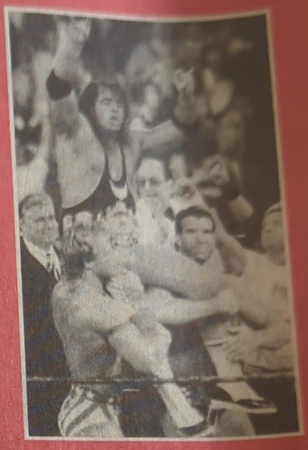

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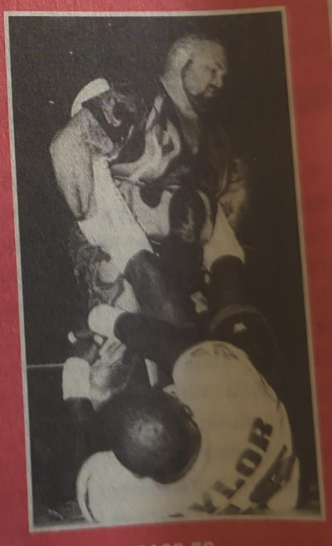

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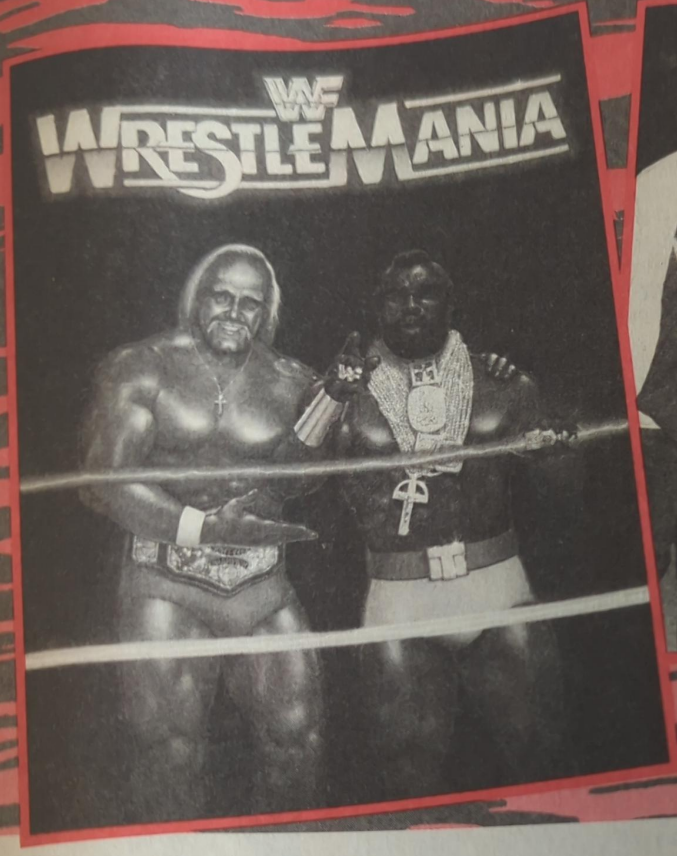
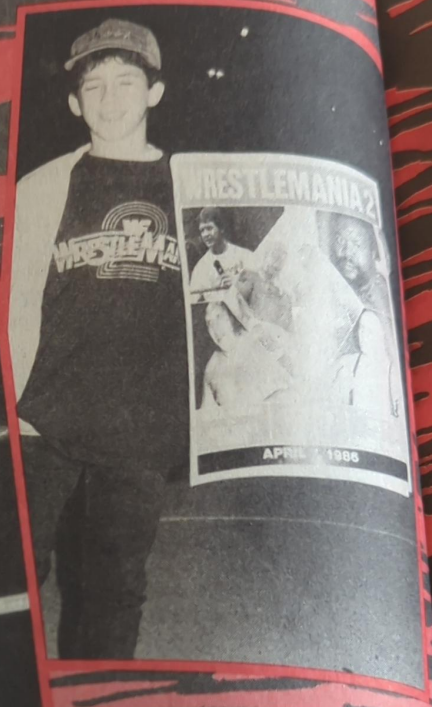
THE 20 GREATEST WRESTLEMANI





IT ALL BEGAN in 1985. WWF head Vince McMahon wanted to create the premier event that wrestlers and fans would point to and anticipate every year. Starrcade was already established, but WrestleMania was the first huge annual wrestling event, and it continues to be the premier pay-per-view every year. Legendary wrestlers, great action, huge crowds in arenas all over North America—that's what WrestleMania is all about.

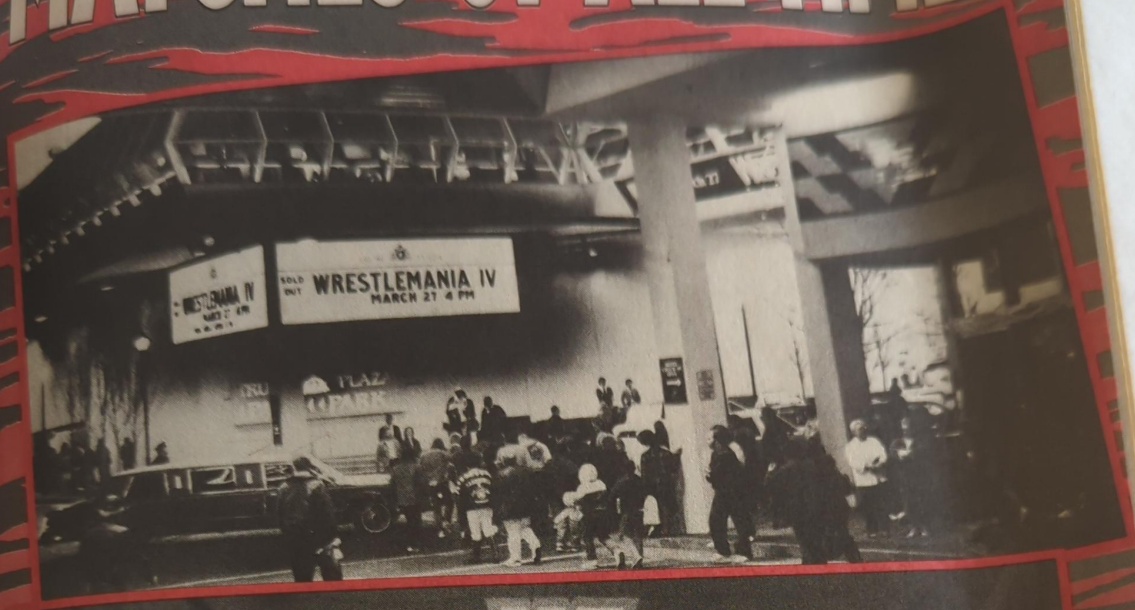
A showcase like WrestleMania puts the spotlight on the WWF's great wrestlers and brings out the best in them. Most young wrestlers can only dream about wrestling (and winning) at WrestleMania.

Something important happens at every WrestleMania, whether it be a big title change, a retirement match, and unexpected return, or a man turning rulebreaker or fan favorite. Just look at the championship statistics.

Randy Savage won the World title in a tournament at WrestleMania IV, but WrestleMania V saw the first World title change in the history of the event, as Hulk Hogan pinned Savage.

Since then, only one man has gone into and come out of a WrestleMania with the World title. That happened at WrestleMania XI, when Kevin "Diesel" Nash "jackknifed" Shawn Michaels. Only at WrestleManias

MATCHES OF ALL-TIME!



WWF WRESTLEMANIA VI

III, V, and VIII has a new Intercontinental champion been crowned. The World tag team title has changed hands six times at WrestleMania.

Five years ago, we ranked the 10 best WrestleMania matches of all-time, but that only covered WrestleManias I through VIII. With four more WrestleManias having taken place since, the editors of WRESTLE AMERICA decided to expand on the list and find 10 additional bouts. But which ones?

Picking just 20 was not easy. We based our selections on two criteria: significance and action level. You probably won't agree with all our choices, but we think you'll agree that reminiscing about 12 years of WrestleMania is a lot of fun.

Obviously, we couldn't be discussing great WrestleMania matches if there weren't a lot of great wrestlers involved to make the matches what they were. You will notice that many grapplers were involved in more than one of our top 20 bouts. Hulk Hogan and Randy Savage were part of five, Bret Hart and Roddy Piper four, and Shawn Michaels three.

So now it's time for you to review the best and the brightest from some of the greatest stars in WWF history. Read now, re-read in the future, and reminisce. Enjoy!

WRESTLEMANIA III

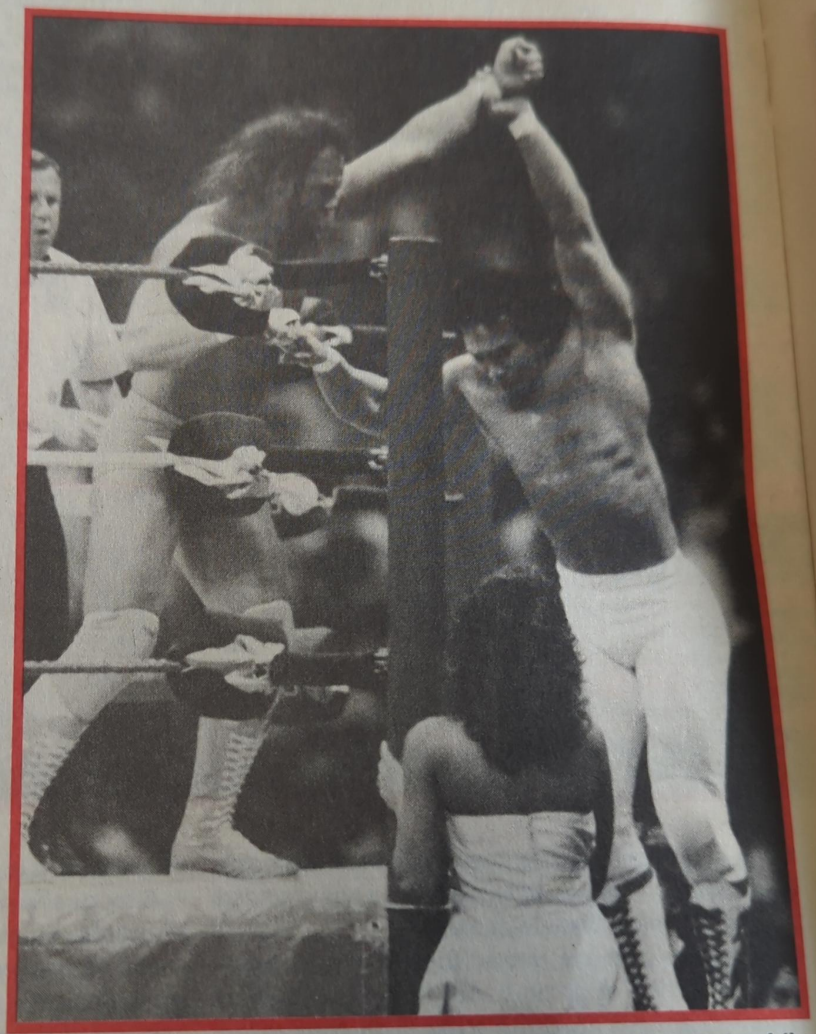
RANDY SAVAGE vs. RICK STEAMBOAT

LOCATION: The Silverdome, Pontiac, Michigan
DATE: March 29, 1987
SIGNIFICANCE: Most of the crowd of 93,173, the largest in wrestling history, was on hand to watch Andre the Giant battle Hulk Hogan for the WWF World title. But they walked out hours later talking about this incredible match, when Savage defended his Intercontinental title against Steamboat, his arch-rival. The two had been at war for several months and this was their greatest battle of all.
ACTION LEVEL: Incredible. Steamboat-Savage was voted Match of the Year. Two of the most talented wrestlers in the WWF engaged in an intense, high-flying war in which most of the action took place above the mat or on the arena floor. There were an incredible 19 two-counts, including 11 by Steamboat.
SYNOPSIS: Months earlier, Steamboat's career was nearly ended when Savage slammed the timekeeper's bell into his head. Savage tried it again—a move that probably would have ended Steamboat's career—but was stopped when George "The Animal" Steele came to Steamboat's rescue.

Steele was a major factor in this match—and in Savage's mind, too. The "Macho Man" was insanely jealous over what he viewed as Steele's advances toward Elizabeth, Savage's lovely manager. The wrestling world saw this as ridiculous, but Savage was blinded by love. Or hatred.

But Savage had control of the match—and Steamboat prone on the mat—when he climbed to the top of the turnbuckle for a flying axhandle. Savage, however took too much time, was pushed off by Steele, and collapsed to the mat. Steamboat executed a perfect reverse-small package and covered Savage for the pin and the belt at 14:35.

The greatest WrestleMania match ever was over. And it wasn't even the main event!



In this incredible contest (there were *19* two-counts!), Steamboat captured the Intercontinental title from Savage, who was then a classic rulebreaker.

RAZOR RAMON vs. SHAWN MICHAELS

LOCATION: Madison Square Garden, New York
DATE: March 20, 1994
SIGNIFICANCE: Razor Ramon was always known as a perennial underachiever. His first Intercontinental championship came after winning a battle royal for the vacant belt after Shawn Michaels had been stripped of the title. This was truly a chance at redemption.

Coming off of a suspension, Michaels was his same, cocky self. Except this time, he was carrying around a faux I-C title belt, claming to be the "real" champion. He told whoever would listen that he never lost the title in the ring, only by executive decision. Ramon took issue. The match was set for both belts. But they would have to climb a ladder to get to them.

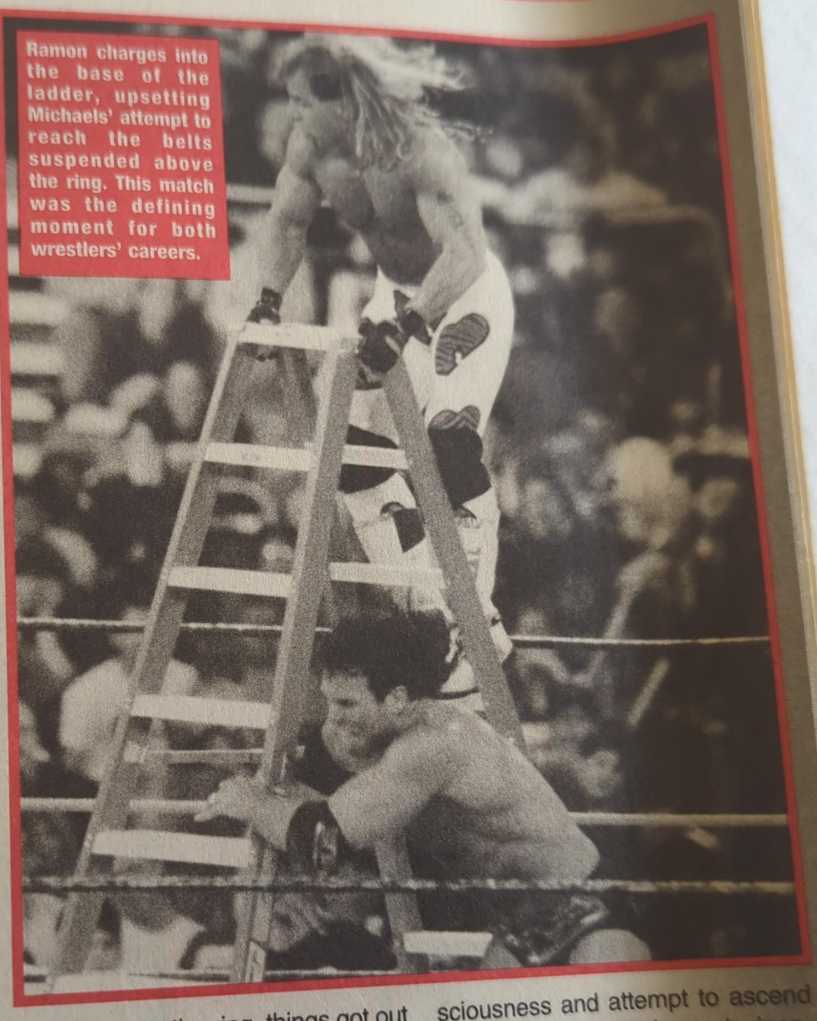
The now famous and first-ever "ladder match" (at a WWF pay-per-view) would settle the claims by both men. The belts would be suspended over the ring out of reach to either competitor.

ACTION LEVEL: We have come to expect the unexpected from Michaels. The ladder gave him the chance to fly even higher and take more risks. But Ramon surprised fans and critics alike, using the ladder and Michael's moves against the former champion. He held his own with Michaels and even tried some of his own death-defying moves. The ladder came into play when Ramon dropkicked it with Michaels nearly at the top. Michaels fell, groin-first, into the awaiting top rope.

SYNOPSIS: The match was a unique combination of brawling and science by both men. But with a ladder in or near the ring, things got out of hand. It came into play very early in the match. The ladder was not only a tool to victory, but a weapon that could inflict serious injury. Despite their differing styles, the two men were evenly matched.

Although a three-count wouldn't end the match, there were many close calls. Either man would beat his competitor into near unconsciousness and attempt to ascend the ladder. The goal was to incapacitate your opponent so they would not give chase up the harrowing ladder steps.

Ramon came out victorious and Michaels was sent back to regroup. For Michaels, it was a minor setback in his quest. For Ramon, it was a defining moment for the now-former underachiever.



Ramon charges into the base of the ladder, upsetting Michaels' attempt to reach the belts suspended above the ring. This match was the defining moment for both wrestlers' careers.

WRESTLEMANIA III

ANDRE THE GIANT VS. HULK HOGAN

LOCATION: The Silverdome, Pontiac, Michigan
DATE: March 29, 1987
SIGNIFICANCE: Although this main event was eventually overshadowed by the Rick Steamboat-Randy Savage Intercontinental title match on the undercard, the prematch hype for Andre-Hogan eclipsed anything in wrestling history.

Andre and Hogan had gone from friends to bitter enemies because of Andre's desire to win his first-ever world title. Andre was incensed that Hogan, his friend, wouldn't offer him a title shot. So he signed a contract to be managed by Bobby Heenan and then forced Hogan into a match with a brutal televised attack.

Suddenly, the two most popular wrestlers in the world were at war. And there was this added tidbit: Hogan, the seemingly unbeatable World champion, was up against a man who had never been pinned.

A crowd of 93,173 packed the Silverdome, the largest crowd to ever attend any indoor event in North America. Everybody wanted to see Andre-Hogan.

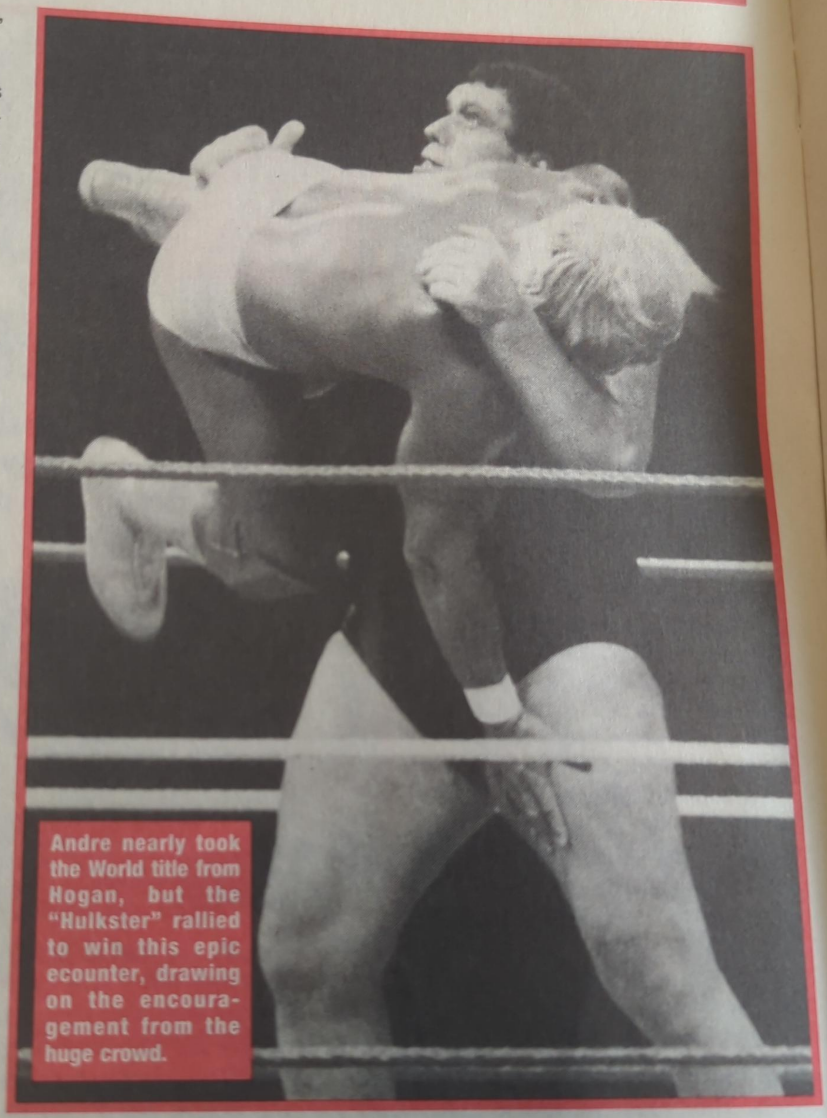
ACTION LEVEL: Not bad, considering that the 525-pound Andre lumbered around the ring—and Hogan is not known for high speed antics. These rivals wrestled all-out from start to finish.

SYNOPSIS: Barely a minute had expired when Andre lifted Hogan and dropped him to the mat. He covered him for the pin and the crowd watched in shock as referee Joey Marella counted one, two, and almost ... three!

But not quite. Hogan lifted his shoulder and Andre protested that the count was too slow. For months afterward, Andre's near-pin would be the subject of hot debate.

Hogan finally won. He accomplished the incredible feat of bodyslamming Andre to the mat and he legdropped him for the pin at 12:01.

History had been made. Years later, this much is clear: WrestleMania III was the greatest WrestleMania of all!



Andre nearly took the World title from Hogan, but the "Hulkster" rallied to win this epic ecounter, drawing on the encouragement from the huge crowd.

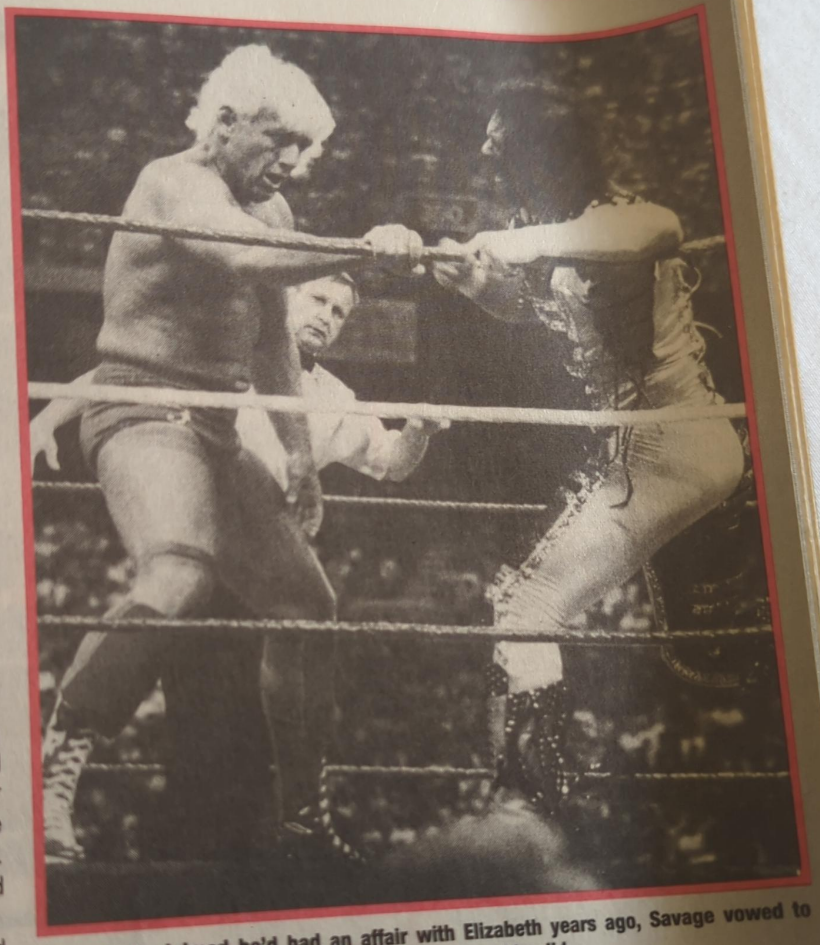
RANDY SAVAGE vs. RIC FLAIR

LOCATION: The Hoosier Dome, Indianapolis, Indiana
DATE: April 5, 1992
SIGNIFICANCE: Savage, a former WWF World champion, got his first shot at Flair's belt. But more importantly, at least to Savage, was a set of incriminating photos of Flair and Savage's wife, Elizabeth.
ACTION LEVEL: Magnificent. Two of the finest all-around wrestlers this sport has ever seen forgot about science and went at it with fierce intensity. There were 11 two-counts, six by Flair and five by Savage. By the middle of the match, Flair's face was a bloody mess.
SYNOPSIS: Flair controlled the opening six minutes with four two-counts and Savage looked beaten. But the "Macho Man" fought back to take control, and with 13 minutes expired seemed to have Flair beaten.

Savage connected with a flying elbow off the top rope, hooked Flair's leg, and covered him for the pin. But just before the referee could finish the count, "Mr. Perfect" Curt Henning interfered on Flair's behalf.

With 14 minutes gone, the crowd roared in excitement as Elizabeth rushed to the ring. Security guards tried to pull her away, but Elizabeth would not be denied. She didn't want to interfere; she merely wanted to urge on her man.

With 15 minutes gone, Flair locked Savage in a figure-four leglock and kept the hold on for over a minute. Savage finally broke the figure-four but his left leg was obviously hurt.



When Flair claimed he'd had an affair with Elizabeth years ago, Savage vowed to exact painful revenge on the World champion, and he did.

Still, he managed a reverse small package for a two-count. Then Flair dropped a knee on Savage and continued working on the left leg. When Savage got to his feet, Flair grabbed Savage and wound up for a big right hand. But Savage blocked the punch, scored with a big right, grabbed Flair's trunks, and rolled him over for the pin at 18:05.

The crowd went wild. Elizabeth rushed into the ring to celebrate with Savage. Flair walked over and kissed Elizabeth on the lips, but Elizabeth slapped him and Savage battered him. The "Macho Couple" had their ultimate revenge. Savage was a two-time World champion.

WRESTLEMANIA I

HULK HOGAN & MR. T VS. RODDY PIPER & PAUL ORNDORFF

LOCATION: Madison Square Garden, New York
DATE: March 31, 1985
SIGNIFICANCE: WrestleMania I, the granddaddy of them all, was born out of the previous few months. Wrestling's popularity reached a peak in this country because of Hogan's huge popularity and the unique "rock 'n' wrestling connection." Purists scoffed, but the sport grew.

A month earlier in the Garden, Hogan and Piper squared off in a match billed as "The Brawl To Settle It All." It was aired live on MTV and drew added attention because rock star Cyndi Lauper was in Hogan's corner.

But Paul Orndorff was in Piper's corner and the match reached a brutal conclusion when Piper and Orndorff attacked the defenseless Lauper. Mr. T came to Lauper's rescue and the sides for WrestleMania I were drawn.

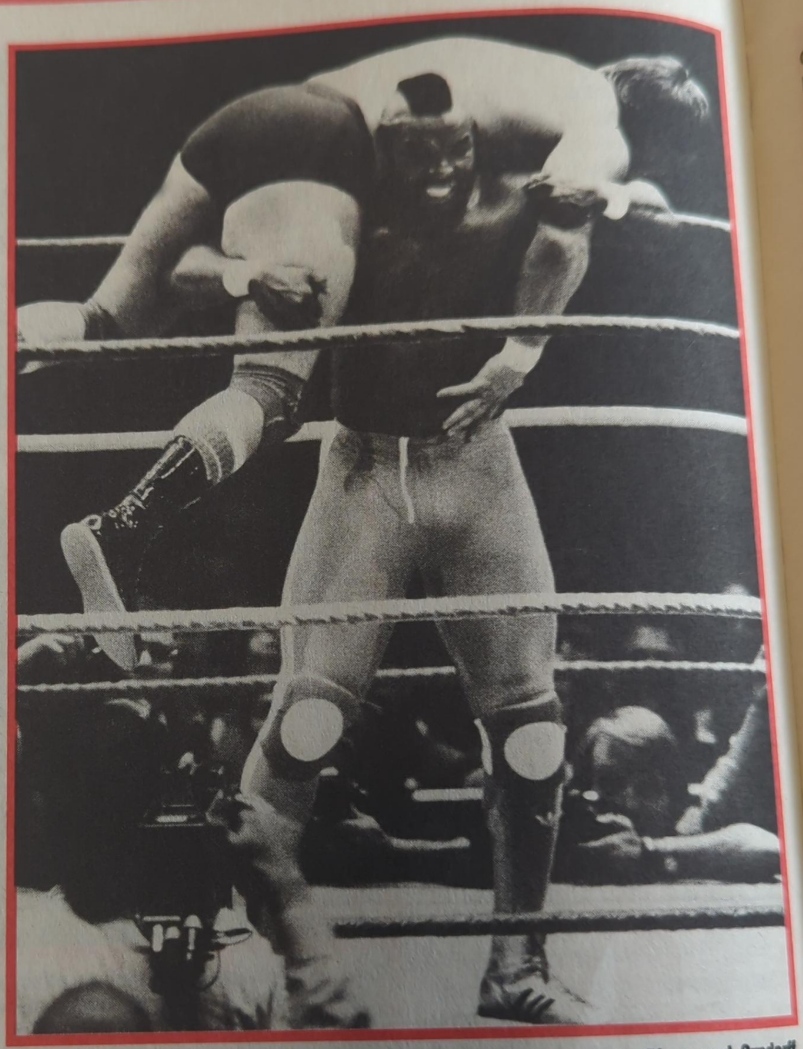
A sold-out crowd packed Madison Square Garden, while hundreds of thousands of fans watched on closed-circuit TV in arenas and theaters throughout the country.

Liberace was the timekeeper. Muhammad Ali was special referee outside of the ring. Pat Patterson was the in-ring referee. Billy Martin was the ring announcer. A circus atmosphere prevailed.

In short, it was a circus. But Hogan and Mr. T vs. Piper and Orndorff was also good enough to be named Match of the Year by the fans. The videotape of WrestleMania I was in the *Billboard* Top 10 for the final six months of 1985.

ACTION LEVEL: Four angry wrestlers with the brightest spotlight in wrestling history went all out from the opening bell. It was an unexpectedly satisfying match. And if Hogan-Piper was "The Brawl To Settle It All," this was "The Brawl To End All Brawls."

SYNOPSIS: A feud begat a feud. When Orndorff and Piper crossed signals late in the match, Hogan easily bodyslammed and legdropped Orndorff for the pin. It kicked off an Orndorff-Piper feud—and another memorable chapter in WWF history.



Mr. T stepped through the ropes to help Hulk Hogan humiliate Piper and Orndorff. This match brought the WWF unprecedented recognition.

RANDY SAVAGE VS. TED DiBIASE

LOCATION: Atlantic City Convention Center, Atlantic City, New Jersey

DATE: March 27, 1988

SIGNIFICANCE: It was the final match of a one-day tournament for the vacant WWF World title. How it became vacant is another story.

On February 5, 1988, World champion Hulk Hogan and Andre the Giant squared off for the first time since WrestleMania III. The match, carried nationally on NBC, ended in mass confusion when Andre was the beneficiary of a questionable pin count by Earl Hebner, the twin brother of scheduled referee Dave Hebner.

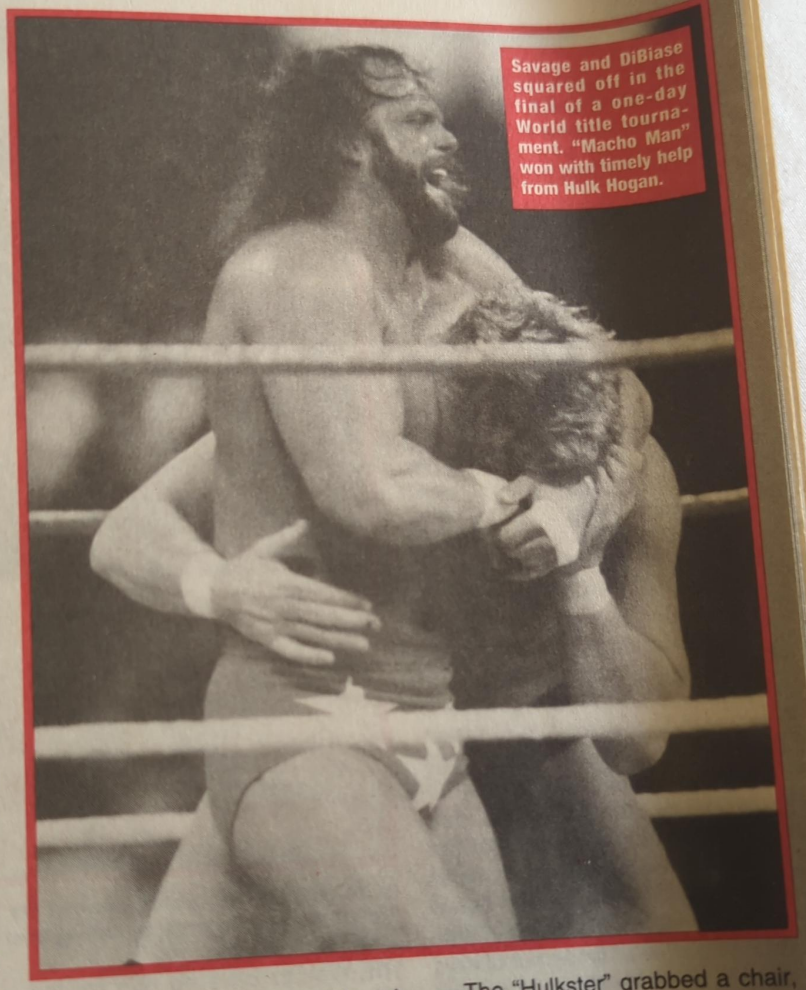
Then the world watched in shock as Andre handed the World title belt to Ted DiBiase. It was clear: DiBiase had paid off the referee and then bought the belt from Andre.

The WWF was suddenly bereft with scandal. WWF President Jack Tunney solved the dispute days later by refusing to overturn Andre's "win" over Hogan. But he ruled that Andre vacated the title when he gave the belt to DiBiase. And, Tunney said, it is illegal for one man to give the title to another man.

The title was declared vacant and put up for grabs at WrestleMania IV.

In the second round, Andre and Hogan battled to a double-disqualification. With the big guns down, it came down to Savage-DiBiase.

ACTION LEVEL: With Andre at ringside for DiBiase and Hogan at ringside for Savage, fans couldn't decide whether to watch the hot action taking place inside of the ring or the potential for trouble outside of the ring.



Savage and DiBiase squared off in the final of a one-day World title tournament. "Macho Man" won with timely help from Hulk Hogan.

SYNOPSIS: They should have watched both. DiBiase had Savage in a sleeperhold and the "Macho Man" seemed ready to submit. But referee Dave Hebner was distracted by Andre, and that gave Hogan time to rescue Savage.

The "Hulkster" grabbed a chair, bounded into the ring, smashed DiBiase over the back, and returned to ringside. When Hebner turned around, Savage had Dibiase covered for the pin and the title. Hogan, Savage, and Elizabeth celebrated together in the ring and the noise in the Convention Center was deafening.

WRESTLEMANIA VI

HULK HOGAN vs. THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR

LOCATION: SkyDome, Toronto, Ontario
DATE: April 1, 1990
SIGNIFICANCE: WrestleMania goes international for the first time. A crowd of 67,678 packs the SkyDome for what would be voted Match of the Year: Hogan, the champion of the 1980s, vs. Warrior, who wanted to become champion of the 1990s.

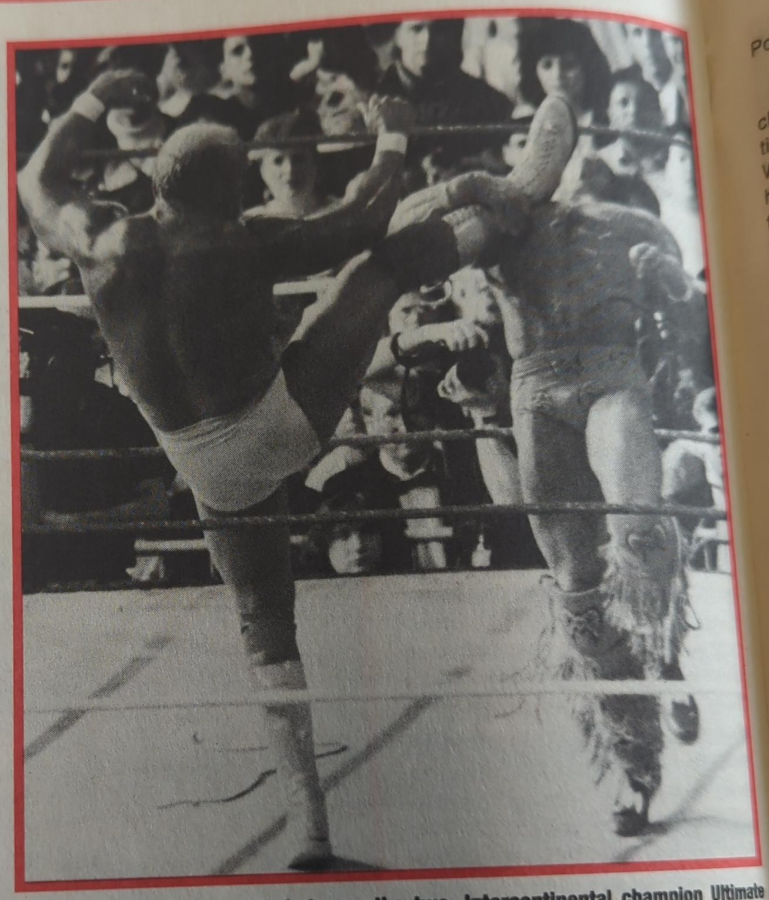
Hogan, the World champion, and The Ultimate Warrior, the Intercontinental champion, weren't really enemies when WrestleMania VI rolled around. They were, instead, two men with insatiable egos and common goals. Being second-best wasn't good enough for Warrior.

Hogan and Warrior had a brief skirmish at The Royal Rumble—won by Hogan—and numerous staredowns in the weeks preceding WrestleMania VI. Tempers flared as the big day approached, but the wrestling world got what it expected: a contentious match between two men with tremendous respect for each other.

ACTION LEVEL: Size vs. size. Power vs. power. It was like two bulldozers on a collision course as Hogan and Warrior tried to outwill each other. It made for a match that was slow at times but always exciting because the ending could come at any moment.

SYNOPSIS: The match featured another one of Hogan's trademark miracle comebacks, but this one had a different ending.

The Warrior took control with a magnificent gorilla press and smash that sent Hogan from high in the air to flat-out on the mat.



In the first and only match between the two, Intercontinental champion Ultimate Warrior shocked the world by coming from behind to win the World title from Hogan.

The Warrior covered him for the pin, but only got a two-count when Hogan somehow kicked out. Warrior and the big crowd braced for Hogan's rage.

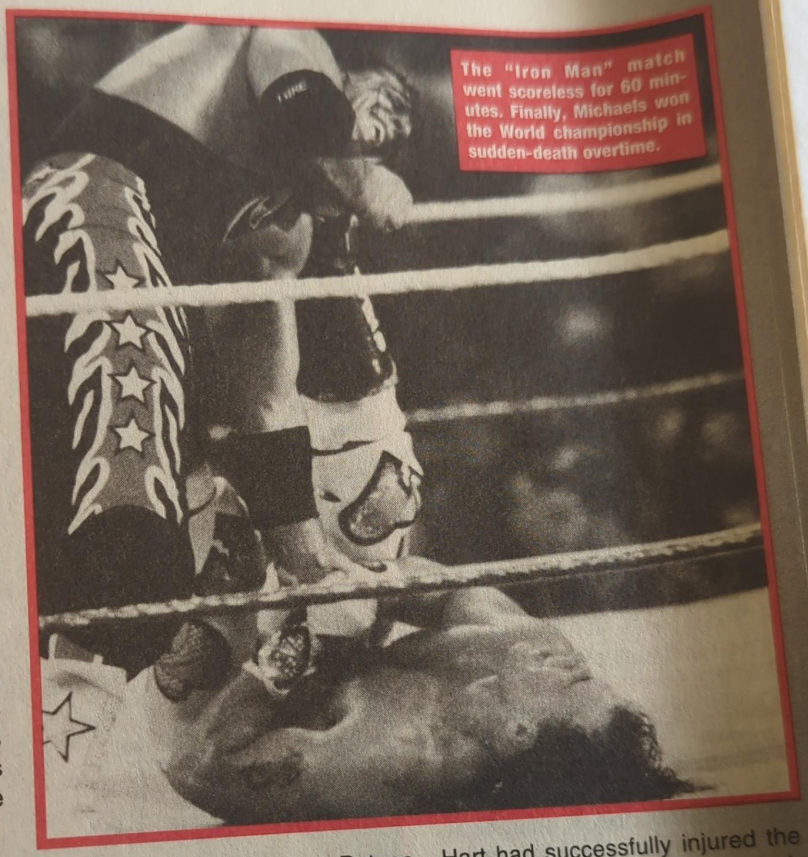
Hogan rallied with a boot to Warrior's face and three punches to the head. He slammed Warrior to the mat, but when Hogan went for the legdrop, something different happened. Warrior rolled out of the way.

That signaled the end of Hogan's second title reign. Warrior got up, splashed Hogan and covered him for the pin at 22:51. Afterward Hogan delivered his belt to Warrior, embraced him, and left the ring. The Warrior had the spotlight to himself and the crowd cheered wildly.

There never was a rematch.

WRESTLEMANIA XII

BRET HART VS. SHAWN MICHAELS



The "Iron Man" match went scoreless for 60 minutes. Finally, Michaels won the World championship in sudden-death overtime.

LOCATION: The Arrowhead Pond, Anaheim, California

DATE: April 2, 1996

SIGNIFICANCE: Shawn Michaels had his second consecutive opportunity to win the WWF World title at WrestleMania. Unlike his match against Diesel, though, this time he would be pitting his technical proficiency and endurance against a man who was every bit his equal in those categories.

This was to be an "Iron Man" match, and its special stipulation would test the combatants to the utmost: The bout would last 60 minutes. Whoever could gain the most falls in that hour would be declared champion.

For Hart, it was a chance to gain another foothold in establishing credibility as WWF World champion. It was also an opportunity to silence critics who had been less than impressed with his three title reigns. Now was his chance to successfully defend his strap at the premier event in the federation.

For Michaels, it was an opportunity for both redemption and to fulfill a 12-year goal that he established for himself as a young rookie. Despite his impressive track record, Michaels had fallen short in previous WrestleManias at the hands of Tatanka (IX), Razor Ramon (X), and Diesel (XI).

ACTION LEVEL: For 60 minutes, it was truly amazing. A true clinic by both men. Each exchanged holds and counterholds with neither able to get the better of the other for an extended period of time. After regulation time, the match was a scoreless tie. But, as history shows, that was not to be the end.

SYNOPSIS: The numbers were staggering. There were 15 two-counts, eight by Hart and seven by Michaels. What is most amazing about that statistic is that there was not one two-count by either wrestler during the first 28 minutes of the bout.

The momentum switch was at such a frantic pace that it was impossible to determine which man was getting the upper hand. Hart had successfully injured the Michaels' back, while the challenger had done damage to the "Hit Man's" left arm and shoulder.

Newly installed WWF President Gorilla Monsoon hasn't foreseen the possibility of the 60 minutes passing without a pinfall (though he should have stated before the match what would happed in the event of a tie) and ordered the match into sudden-death overtime. Nearly two minutes later, Michaels superkicked his way to the championship.

WRESTLEMANIA VII

RANDY SAVAGE vs. THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR

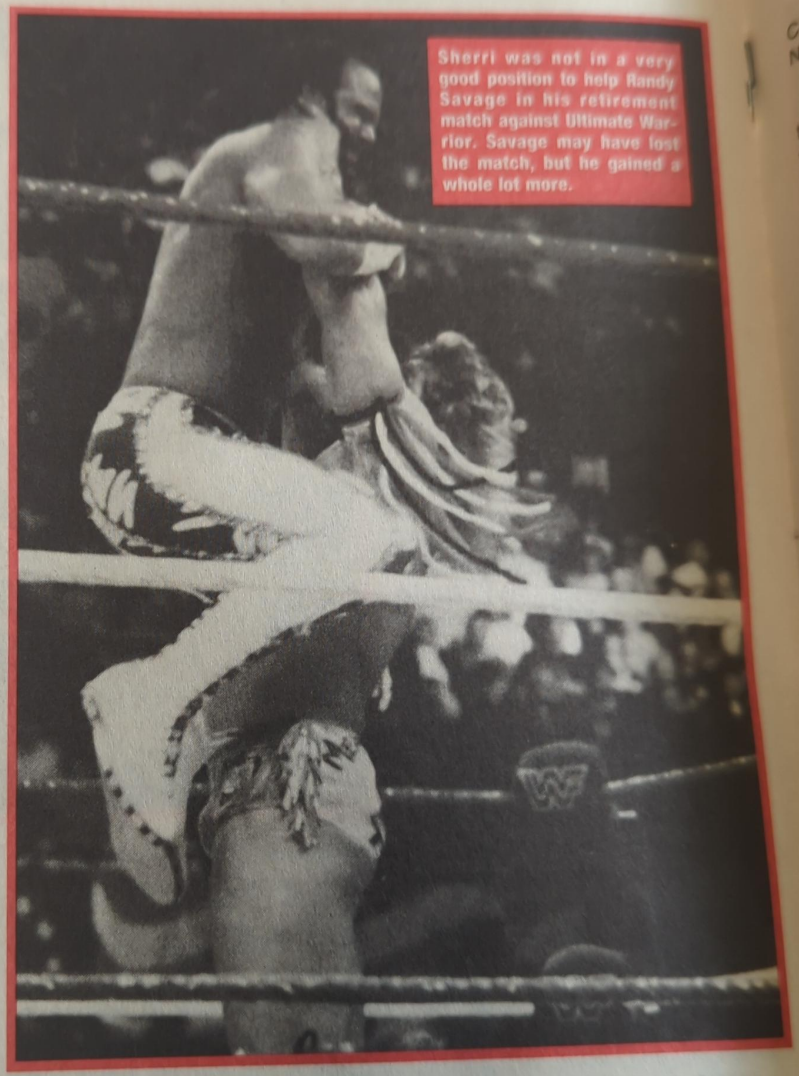
LOCATION: The Los Angeles Coliseum, Los Angeles, California
DATE: March 24, 1991
SIGNIFICANCE: Retirement is a dirty word for any active and successful wrestler. But there was no other way to settle the Savage-Warrior feud than for one to leave wrestling outright. The Warrior issued the challenge after Savage cost him the World title at the Royal Rumble. Savage quickly accepted. His hatred of the Warrior goes back to Warrior's initial days as WWF World champion. Savage demanded title shots and those demands fell on the deaf ears of the champ.

ACTION LEVEL: Intense may not be the word for the action level. After all, each man was fighting for his very existence in wrestling. The highlight of the bout featured each man executing his finishing hold not once, but several times.

SYNOPSIS: The now ex-"Macho King" entered the arena with royal pageantry, but his actions in the ring betrayed his dignified entrance. A determined Ultimate Warrior came to ringside with "No Surrender" emblazoned on his trunks.

At one point, Savage unleashed five of his famous, top-rope elbowsmashes on the Warrior and seemed on the verge of victory. But it was not to be.

The Warrior rallied back, and, after connecting with three straight shoulderblocks, simply placed his boot on his fallen enemy and the referee counted three at the 20:48 mark. Savage's career had ended, but the story had not.



Sherri was not in a very good position to help Randy Savage in his retirement match against Ultimate Warrior. Savage may have lost the match, but he gained a whole lot more.

The now exiled "King's" manager, Sherri Martel, upset over the turn of events and her unemployment, attacked the fallen monarch. That motivated Savage's former manager, Elizabeth, to run from the crowd, leap over the guardrail, and save her ex-charge.

The reunion brought tears to the eyes of Savage, Elizabeth, and many fans. Savage's career may have ended (at least temporarily), but his new life was beginning on the right foot.

HULK HOGAN VS. RANDY SAVAGE

LOCATION: Atlantic City Convention Center, Atlantic City, New Jersey

DATE: April 2, 1989

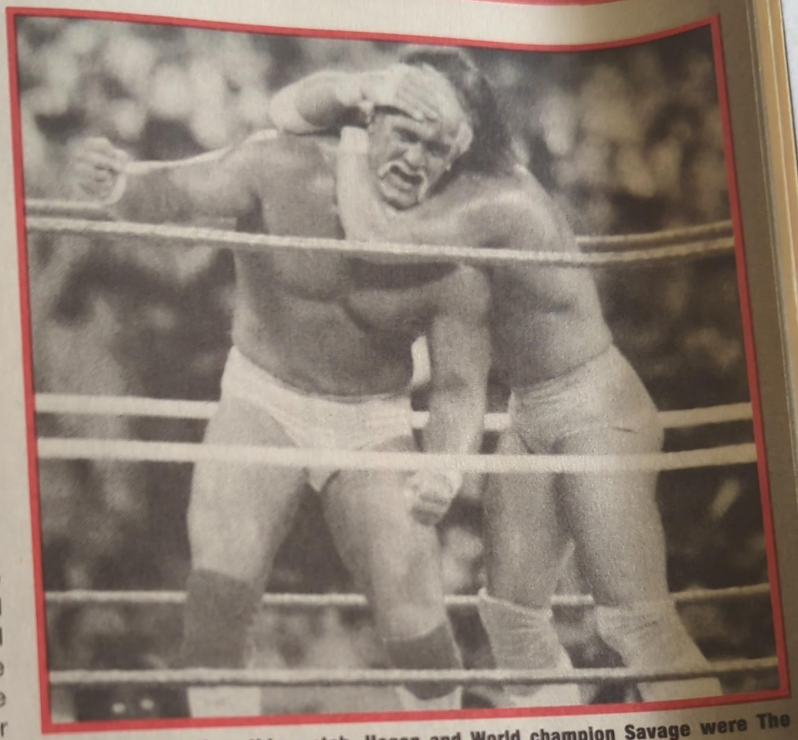
SIGNIFICANCE: Never has there been more hatred between two WrestleMania rivals. Never has there been such heartbreak surrounding a match. When Savage put his WWF World title on the line against Hogan, the stage was set for drama.

Two months earlier on prime-time network TV, Hogan and Savage had a bloody breakup. The two friends wrestled Big Bossman and Akeem, and the postmatch ill-will turned the event into Hogan vs. Savage.

The theme was jealousy. During that match, Hogan left the ring when Elizabeth was knocked out after Savage accidentally fell on her at ringside. Later, Savage walked out on Hogan while the match was in progress, and later attacked Hogan. It was a stunning scene viewed by millions of people on TV. It led to the WrestleMania V main event, which turned out to be a runner-up for Match of the Year.

ACTION LEVEL: Savage was angry and out for revenge. Elizabeth was at ringside but in neither man's corner. Referee Dave Hebner did all he could to keep Savage and Hogan from killing each other. If you wanted action, WrestleMania V main event was the place to look.

SYNOPSIS: Eventually, Hebner escorted Elizabeth back to the dressing room. He feared for her safety because of the intensity of the match. Savage kept yelling at Elizabeth and Hogan tried to protect her.



Two months before this match, Hogan and World champion Savage were The Megapowers. Their breakup led to Hogan recapturing the belt.

With Elizabeth gone, Hogan and Savage finally got down to business. Savage had more to lose and he was clearly the hungrier wrestler. Hogan tried to slow his onslaught, but couldn't help but sustain tremendous amounts of punishment.

But Hogan desperately wanted to win back the title. He wanted to join Bruno Sammartino as the WWF's only two-time World champion. And he did it in unlikely fashion.

Hogan was on the mat. Savage climbed to the turnbuckle. The "Macho Man" executed a flying axhandle, connected clearly, and covered Hogan for the pin. The match was over. Or so it seemed.

Never before had a wrestler kicked out after sustaining the full brunt of Savage's flying axhandle, but Hogan is not just any wrestler. He kicked out at two and launched his trademark rally. The champ was back.

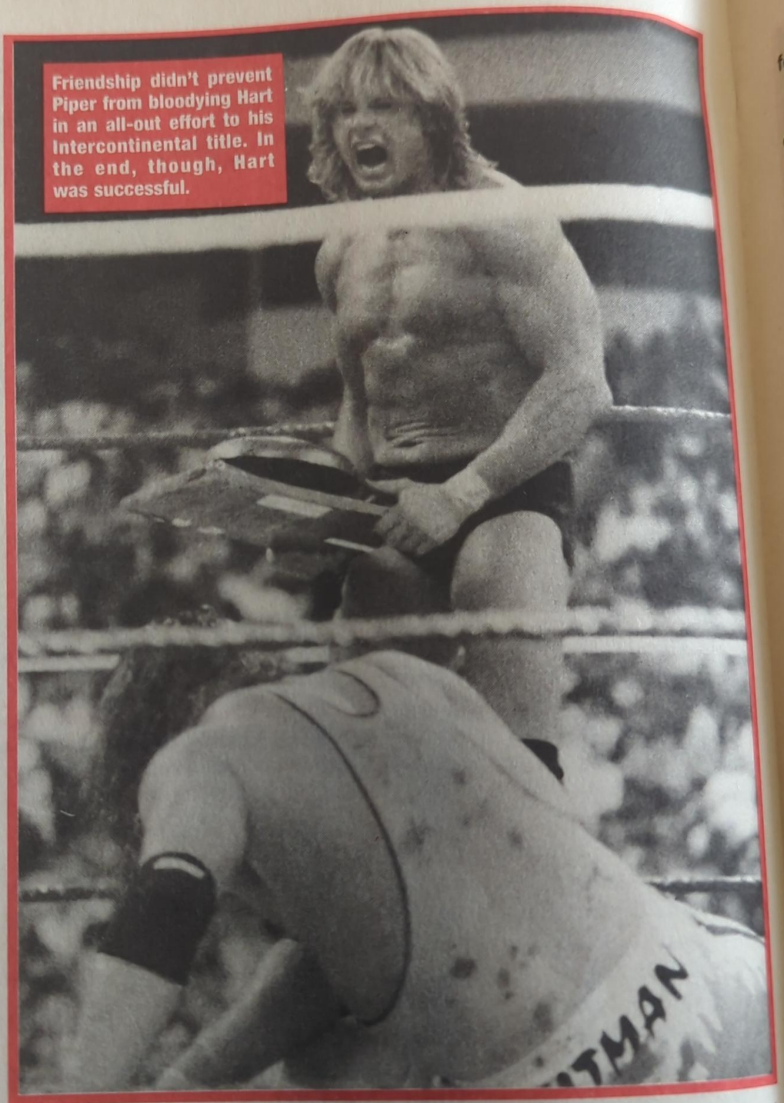
Hogan landed three fists to Savage's head, a boot to the face, and slammed him to the mat. One legdrop and three beats of Hebner's hand later, Hogan was champion once again.

BRET HART vs. RODDY PIPER

LOCATION: The Hoosier Dome, Indianapolis, Indiana
DATE: April 5, 1992
SIGNIFICANCE: Piper, the Intercontinental champion, didn't want to defend the belt against Hart, his good friend and a person he admired. But Hart demanded a title shot and forced Piper to change his mind. By the time they met in the ring at WrestleMania VIII, their friendship was seriously strained.
ACTION LEVEL: Hart is an incredible scientific wrestler with tremendous stamina while Piper is a ruthless brawler who will do anything to defend what's his. No surprises in this one. There were seven two-counts and non-stop action. Early in the match, Hart suffered a cut on his forehead following a bulldog headlock, and bled badly the rest of the way.
SYNOPSIS: When both men connected with crushing clotheslines, Hart and Piper were flat on their backs for 20 seconds. Piper got up first and climbed to the top rope, but Hart recovered and delivered a jarring reverse headbutt. There was a suplex for a two-count. Then Hart scored with a neckbreaker for another two-count.

The turning point came with about 11 minutes expired when Piper pushed Hart into the referee, knocking out the arbiter. Piper clotheslined Hart out of the ring and slammed his face into the outer ringpost. But, again, the match turned.

With both men back in the ring, Piper threatened to hit Hart with the timekeeper's bell. He couldn't bring himself to do it. Instead, Piper placed Hart in a sleeperhold as the referee regained consciousness.



Friendship didn't prevent Piper from bloodying Hart in an all-out effort to his Intercontinental title. In the end, though, Hart was successful.

Hart was desperate. He worked his way toward the corner, used his legs to push off the turnbuckle, and flipped Piper over for the cover, the pin, and the title at 12:37. Afterward, Piper handed the belt to Hart and shook his hand. Piper and Hart returned to the dressing room safe in the knowledge that they had just made wrestling history.

DIESEL VS. SHAWN MICHAELS

LOCATION: Civic Center, Hartford, Connecticut

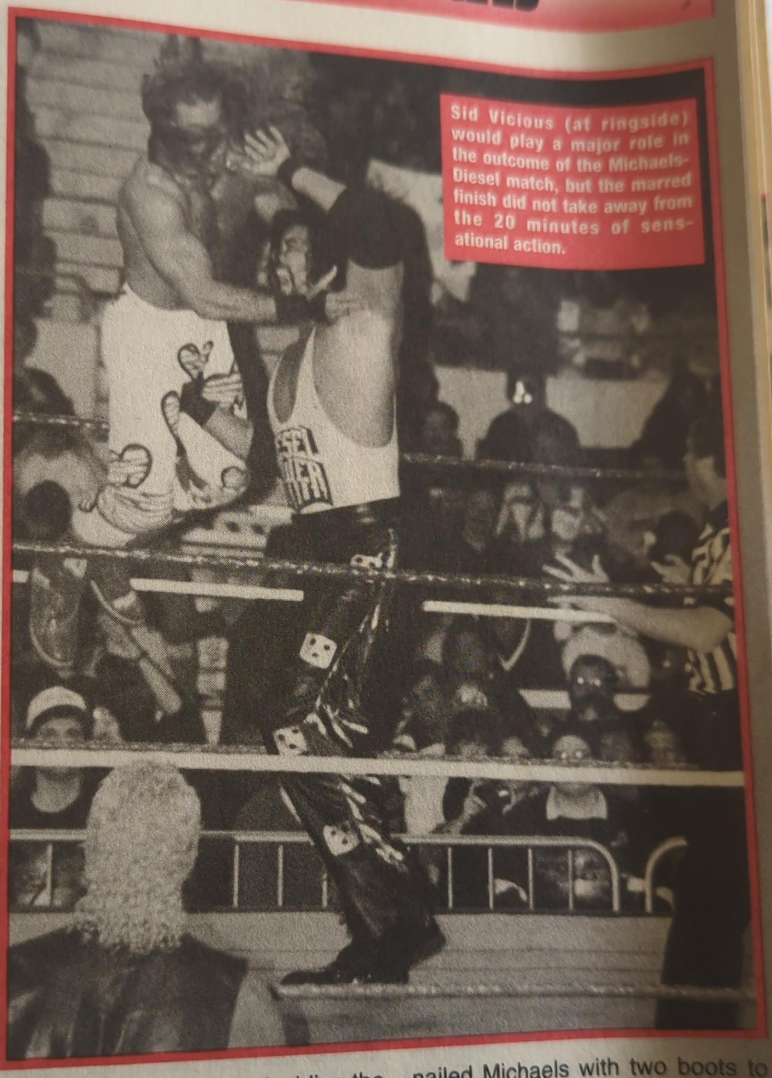
DATE: April 2, 1995

SIGNIFICANCE: No two were closer than Diesel and Shawn Michaels. The "Heartbreak Kid" brought "Big Daddy Cool" into the WWF nearly two years earlier to serve as his bodyguard. Diesel soon came into his own as a wrestler and began to eclipse his "employer." Diesel soared while Michaels struggled. The relationship soon went south.

Most thought that even though Diesel beat Bob Backlund for the WWF World title the previous November, he would not hold it by WrestleMania. Yet, there he was, the former mid-carder headlining the WWF's premier event. Still, he entered as the underdog; most favored the more technically sound Michaels, who was accompanied by another giant, Sid Vicious.

ACTION LEVEL: Months of building anger spilled out in 20 minutes. It was the sweet science and acrobatics of Michaels vs. the raw power of Diesel. Fans wondered how two former best friends with such differing styles would function against each other. The match lived up to all expectations despite being out-hyped by the Bam Bam Bigelow-Lawrence Taylor match on the undercard. Unfortunately, though, it wasn't solely the wrestlers' skills that determined the outcome.

SYNOPSIS: Diesel immediately used his strength by battering his former friend early. A resilient Michaels came back and baffled his larger counterpart with speed, agility, and outright recklessness.



Sid Vicious (at ringside) would play a major role in the outcome of the Michaels-Diesel match, but the marred finish did not take away from the 20 minutes of sensational action.

The key moment in deciding the winner came when referee Earl Hebner twisted his ankle trying to keep Vicious from interfering. With Hebner hurt, Michaels executed a super-kick on Diesel, but a recovering Hebner was 10 seconds too late in executing a three-count.

Diesel shook off the effects, nailed Michaels with two boots to the face, and jackknifed his foe at 20:41 for the victory. Diesel's win improved his stature as a wrestler and a champion. But he also made history as the first WWF champion to enter and leave with his belt since Hulk Hogan at Wrestlemania III.

BRET HART vs. OWEN HART

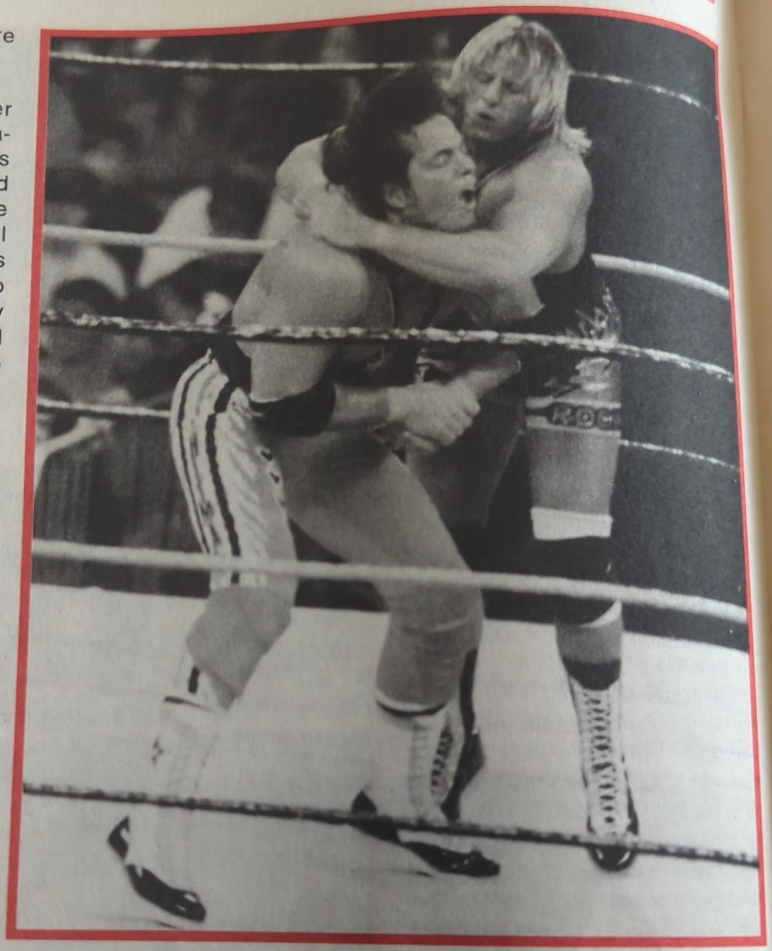
LOCATION: Madison Square Garden, New York
DATE: March 20, 1994
SIGNIFICANCE: This brother vs. brother bout was the culmination of Bret Hart and Owen Hart's five-month war of words. It started at Survivor Series with a dispute and blew apart at the Royal Rumble when Owen attacked his sibling. Bret wanted nothing to do with this match but eventually relented. Ironically, many viewed this match as the resolution to the Harts' problems. In truth, it was only the beginning.
ACTION LEVEL: Both Harts are sound technical wrestlers. Despite Owen's new attitude, he maintained a scientific ground attack. Holds were met with counterholds. Tempers flared with pushes, shoves, and slaps to the face. Bret's lessons were met with Owen's rulebreaking tactics.

In the history of WrestleManias, this may go down as the most competitive and even match with two wrestlers of roughly the same size and trained by the same man. At times, the moves of one would mirror the other.

SYNOPSIS: Bret had to remain focused. Win or lose, he would still get his shot at the WWF World title. Owen was wound tight. Every success he had was cause for exaggerated celebration. Every setback would cause a tantrum.

The match was 20 minutes of give and take. There were more reversals than anyone could count. A possible turning point for Bret came when Owen left his ground attack to try an off-the-top-rope headbutt. A groggy Owen felt a barrage of clotheslines, Russian leg sweeps, and fist-drops from the second rope. Bret had become as obsessed with victory as his brother.

With Owen groggy and ripe for defeat, Bret, positioned on his brother's shoulders, attempted a roll-up from the top rope. Owen caught his legs coming down and pinned his brother at 20:21. The crowd was stunned. Bret Hart was stunned. But no one was more stunned than Owen himself. The score between the brothers was 1-0. But this feud was far from being settled.



Owen's pinfall victory over Bret at the biggest event of the year probably did more to extend this brother vs. brother feud than any ill-feelings the two have for one another. Owen has spent years trying to duplicate that accomplishment.

BRET HART vs. YOKOZUNA

LOCATION: Madison Square Garden, New York
DATE: March 20, 1994
SIGNIFICANCE: Bret Hart had waited one long year for his chance at redemption against the man who beat him for the WWF World title at the previous WrestleMania. Hart had been snubbed for 12 months while men like Lex Luger and The Undertaker received their chance at Yokozuna's World title. It took a victory at the Royal Rumble (albeit a tie with Luger) to secure his shot.

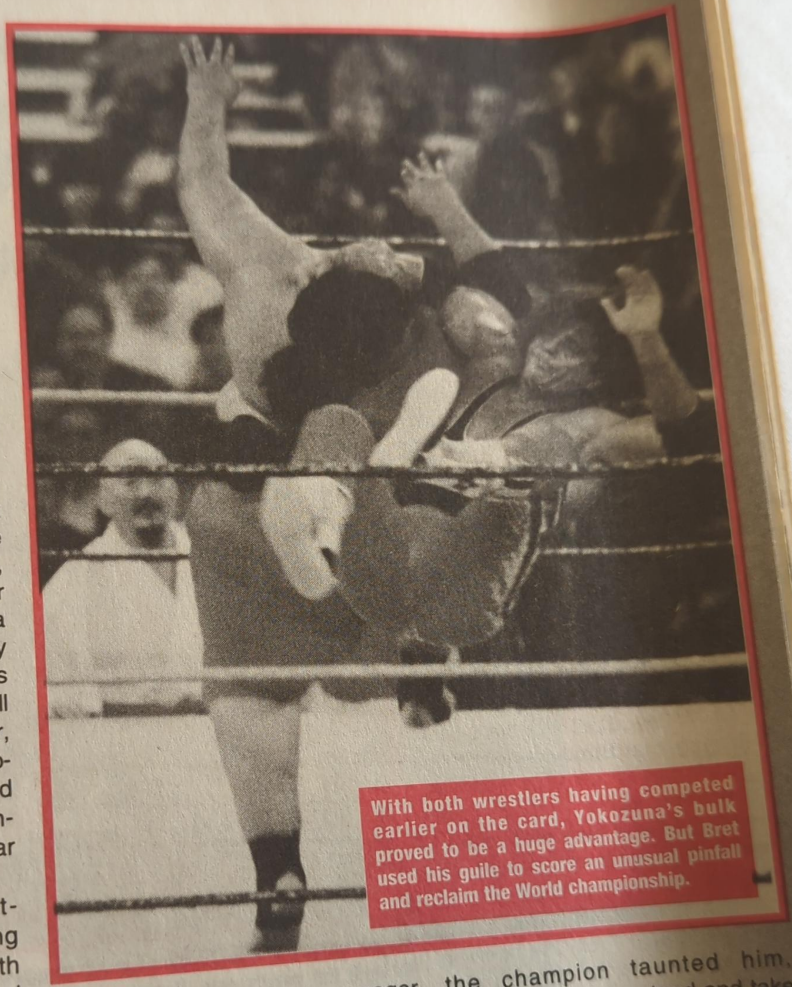
For trivia buffs, this match was the first and only WrestleMania rematch for the WWF World title.

ACTION LEVEL: Hart practically abandoned the scientific style that had gained him title success. He took a completely offensive posture, brawling with the former sumo star from the outset. Hart entered with a clear disadvantage, a knee injury suffered in his earlier match with his brother Owen. Yokozuna, on a roll after a DQ victory over Lex Luger, smelled the exhaustion of his opponent. He was relentless and used his massive weight to his advantage. Hart used his speed to wear down the monster.

SYNOPSIS: Yokozuna attacked Hart immediately, hoping to quickly sap whatever strength he had remaining in his injured body. Hart tried several comebacks, but to no avail. Yokozuna was on a mission, battering Hart with chops, punches, forearms, and bodyslams.

Special referee Roddy Piper was determined to keep the match under control. Fast five-counts were the rule. When Hart had the opportunity for a pinfall, manager Jim Cornette pulled Piper out of the ring. Instead of issuing a disqualification, the "Rowdy Scot" issued a fist to Cornette's jaw.

Yokozuna was becoming confident that he would go on to a second consecutive victory over "The Hitman." As Bret lay on the mat, the champion taunted him, demanding that he stand and take more punishment. A clumsy mistake by the champion, though, would cost him the match. In an attempt to deliver his "Banzai drop," Yokozuna slipped off the second rope, fell back, and was pinned at the 10:31 mark.



With both wrestlers having competed earlier on the card, Yokozuna's bulk proved to be a huge advantage. But Bret used his guile to score an unusual pinfall and reclaim the World championship.

HULK HOGAN VS. KING KONG BUNDY

LOCATION: Los Angeles Sports Arena, Los Angeles, California

DATE: April 7, 1986

SIGNIFICANCE: The Hogan-Bundy feud started out two months earlier at the tail end of the Hogan-Don Muraco feud. During a nationally televised match between Muraco and Hogan in Phoenix, Bundy stormed the ring and attacked the "Hulkster." Hogan suffered severe rib injuries following a series of Bundy big splashes. Bundy gloated over his actions.

Bundy had accomplished two objectives. First, he seriously injured Hogan. Second, he won the spotlight at WrestleMania II and got to wrestle Hogan for the WWF World title.

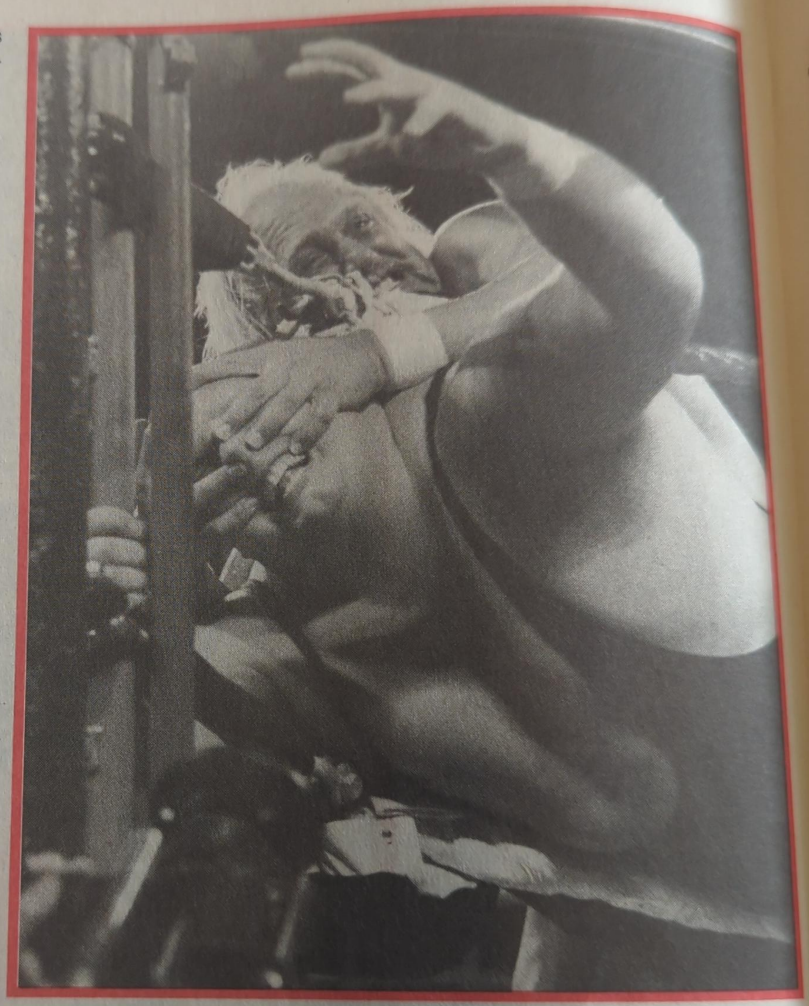
The match was held in a steel cage, but it was not your ordinary steel cage. The WWF again broke with tradition by constructing a cage with wide spaces between the bars. The reason for this was obvious: better TV visibility.

ACTION LEVEL: Not bad, considering that Bundy is immobile and Hogan is not known for his scientific skills. The hatred between these men was intense and they took obvious pleasure in hurting one another. It was a ferocious match.

SYNOPSIS: From the opening bell, Bundy went for Hogan's ribs. Hogan wore a wrap around his torso, but Bundy quickly pulled it off. He then tied Hogan to a rope and tried to choke him with the wrap.

But Hogan escaped and mounted a counterattack. He smashed Bundy's head into the cage several times, opening a deep gash on Bundy's forehead. Before long, Bundy—not Hogan—looked like the injured wrestler.

Hogan was later victimized by Bundy's big splash, but seemed to draw power from the cheers of the crowd. The champ delivered a stunning bodyslam, followed that with a legdrop, and then began to climb the cage. Bundy got to his feet and grabbed Hogan's leg, but the "Hulkster" kicked him down to the mat and dropped to the floor in victory.



Hogan makes a desperate grab for Bundy's face, preventing him from escaping through the cage's gate. Hogan was able to overcome Bundy in arguably the most courageous effort of his storied career.

WRESTLEMANIA III

RODDY PIPER vs. ADRIAN ADONIS

LOCATION: Pontiac Silverdome, Pontiac, Michigan
DATE: March 29, 1987
SIGNIFICANCE: Although history shows that it did not last, "Rowdy" Roddy Piper had announced his retirement following his "hair vs. hair" match with "Adorable" Adrian Adonis. Hogan vs. Andre may have won headlines. Savage vs. Steamboat may have won awards. But Roddy Piper won the hearts of 93,173 fans in the Pontiac Silverdome. For the moment, it was his swan song and the fans relished seeing Piper in action one last time.

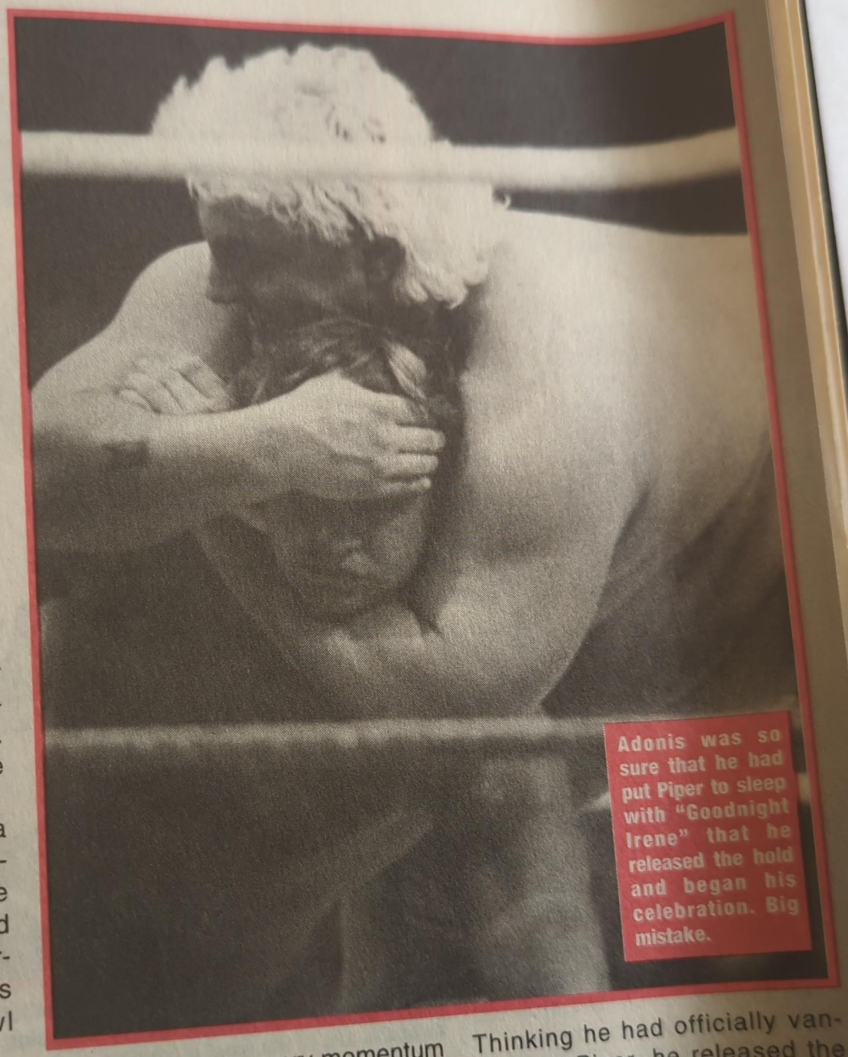
The match was signed after Adonis had taken over "Piper's Pit" with his "Flower Shop" while the "Rowdy Scot" was on hiatus to make a movie. Piper returned to see the flora and fauna that replaced his "pit." When Piper confronted his former ally regarding the situation, he was attacked. Piper retaliated by destroying the "Flower Shop" set.

ACTION LEVEL: This was a brawl in classic Roddy Piper fashion. He gave the fans at the Silverdome exactly what they had come to see, good old "RP" tearing into an opponent. There was no science at all, just a brawl between two hated rivals.

SYNOPSIS: Piper immediately went after Adonis with his belt. The leather tore into the flesh of the "Adorable One" until Jimmy Hart distracted Piper. Adonis recovered the belt and whipped Piper.

As the two exchanged blows, Piper demanded more from his foe. The intensity of the fight was giving Piper necessary momentum to win. Just as that momentum peaked, Hart sprayed Piper in the face with Adonis' atomizer. With his opponent blinded, Adonis clamped on his classic "Goodnight Irene" sleeperhold.

But an error in judgment would prevent Adonis from winning and maintaining his bleached locks. Thinking he had officially vanquished Piper, he released the hold and raised his hands in victory. Brutus Beefcake ran into the ring, revived Piper, and the Scot applied his own sleeperhold for the victory. Minutes later, Piper drank in the adulation of the crowd and helped Beefcake shear his fallen opponent.



Adonis was so sure that he had put Piper to sleep with "Goodnight Irene" that he released the hold and began his celebration. Big mistake.

WRESTLEMANIA XI

BAM BAM BIGELOW VS. LAWRENCE TAYLOR

LOCATION: Civic Center, Hartford, Connecticut
DATE: April 2, 1995
SIGNIFICANCE: Lawrence Taylor went to the Royal Rumble months earlier with the intention of watching a great wrestling card from a great front row seat. But when Bam Bam Bigelow thought that "L.T." was mocking him after a tag team title loss, he took exception and shoved the former football great. That shove led to a challenge by Bigelow for Taylor to face him at WrestleMania. Taylor, a former All-Pro football player who never wrestled, accepted.

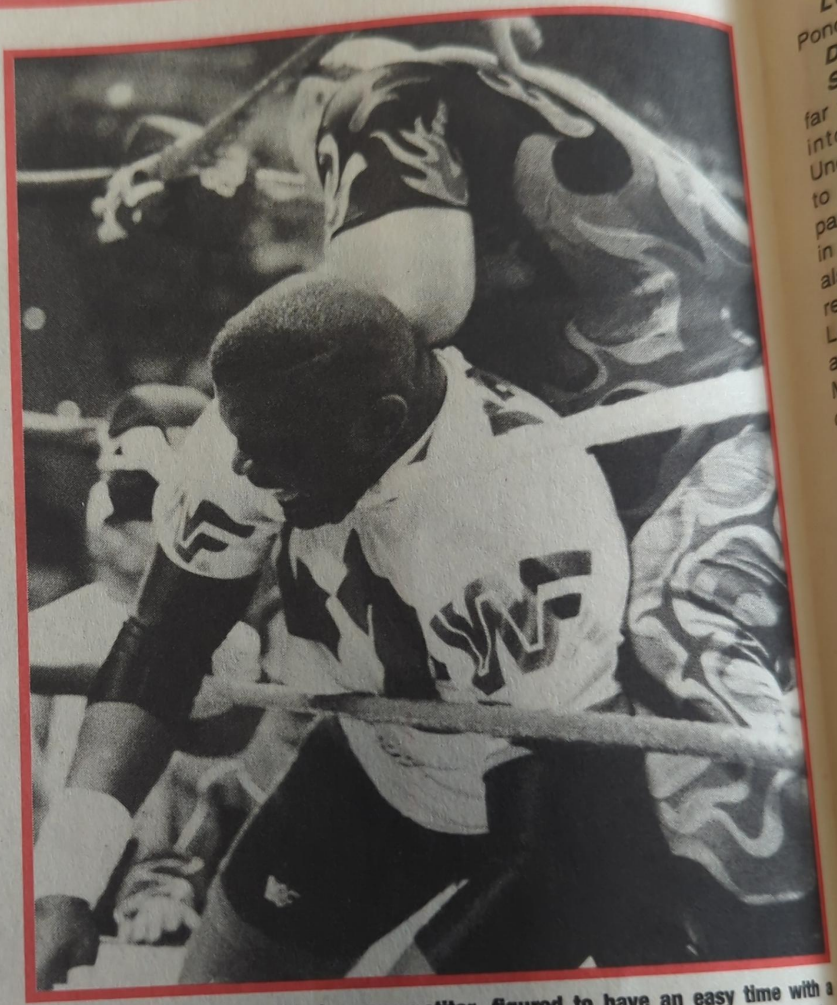
The WWF would enjoy a tremendous amount of mainstream press, something it had been missing for years. It was momentum that it sorely needed as WCW was gaining significant ground on the federation, but had stumbled with the disastrous pay-per-view, Uncensored.

ACTION LEVEL: Other football players have tried to make a quick transition to wrestling and the results have been disastrous. But Taylor was determined to prove that he wasn't just another wrestler-wannabe. His pride would not allow him to accept an easy payday for a sub-par effort. He trained hard for this match and stunned the world with his performance.

SYNOPSIS: Taylor knew that Bigelow would try to simply outwrestle him, and he responded with something no one expected: a wrestling repertoire. He executed jackknifes, devastating forearm smashes, and, appropriately, some defensive ability.

Bigelow was shocked and thrown off his game. His manager, Ted DiBiase, looked on in amazement as Taylor began to resemble a seasoned grappler. But a rookie mistake caused "L.T." to fall victim to a Bigelow spinning kick to his head. He was down, but not out.

At 11:42, the shove heard 'round the world became the pinfall heard 'round the world. Taylor flew from the second rope and knocked Bigelow cold with a flying forearm. It was a move that would have gotten him ejected from an NFL game. But on that night, it gave him a victory.



Bigelow, a seasoned world-class competitor, figured to have an easy time with a retired football star making his pro wrestling debut. Given the circumstances, Taylor turned in one of the most incredible performances in sport's history.

WRESTLEMANIA XII

DIESEL VS. THE UNDERTAKER

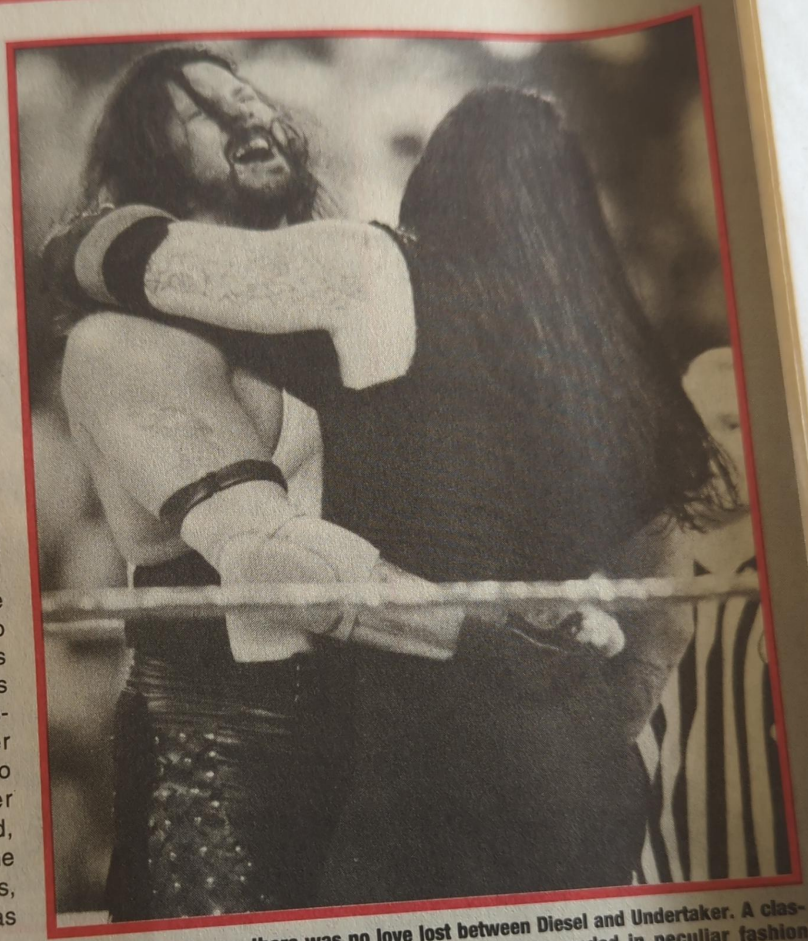
LOCATION: The Arrowhead Pond, Anaheim, California
DATE: March 31, 1996
SIGNIFICANCE: This was by far the most intense feud coming into this WrestleMania. The Undertaker and Diesel had grown to despise each other over the past few months, even interfering in the other's matches. This bout also solidified "Big Daddy Cool's" return to the rulebreaking ranks. Leading up to the match, he had attacked his former buddy, Shawn Michaels, and destroyed 'Taker's coveted coffin with an ax.

This would also be Diesel's last WrestleMania for the time being; he had just agreed to terms with WCW and would be leaving the WWF in May of that year.

ACTION LEVEL: No titles were at stake. Promoters decided to leave the coffins and cages behind this time. Neither man has gained fame as a scientific wrestler. This was a battle of sheer brutality between the WWF's two biggest monsters, both former World champions. As expected, the action was not confined to the ring; the combatants used chairs, metal barriers, and cornerposts as weapons.

SYNOPSIS: The Undertaker attempted to set the pace of the match from the outset. After elbowing Diesel over the top rope, he attempted to hit "Big Daddy Cool" with a chair. An alert Diesel turned at the last instant, whipped the Undertaker into the waiting metal barrier, and slammed him into the outside cornerpost.

For the next five minutes, Diesel hit Undertaker with everything in his arsenal, but 'Taker would not go down. A frustrated Diesel began to make mistakes and The Undertaker soon rallied back, much to the delight of the crowd. But Diesel regained control, pummeling The Undertaker and setting him up for not one, but two jackknives.



Despite the embrace, there was no love lost between Diesel and Undertaker. A classic immovable force-vs.-irresistible-object-encounter ended in peculiar fashion when Diesel paid dearly for turning his back on his opponent.

An overly confident Diesel turned away from his opponent to acknowledge the jeers of the crowd. He took notice of the boos and hisses but did not notice his foe rising up. Undertaker delivered a chokeslam and a tombstone piledriver, and took the pin at 15:32.

"ROWDY RODDY PIPER" VS. GOLDUST

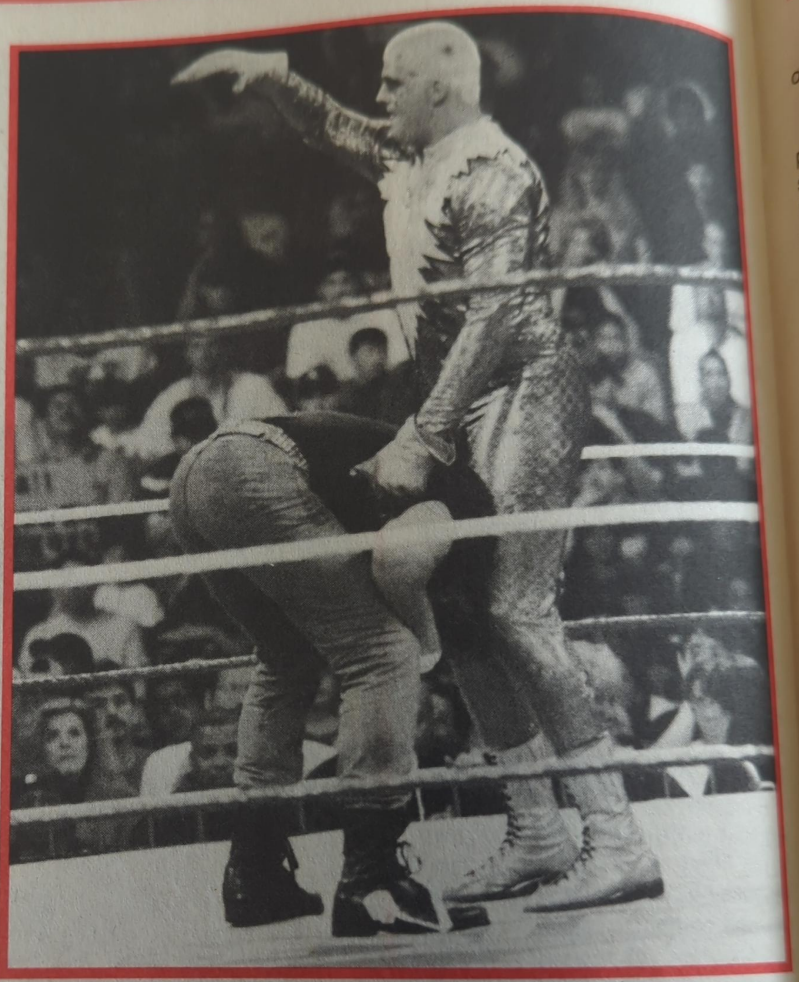
LOCATION: The Arrowhead Pond, Anaheim, California
DATE: March 31, 1996
SIGNIFICANCE: Acting WWF President Roddy Piper was growing weary of Goldust's outlandish tactics both in and out of the ring, not to mention the lewd advances he made toward the "Rowdy Scot" himself. So being a hands-on administrator, he decided to dole out some presidential mandates via a match at WrestleMania. The setting would not be a ring, but a Hollywood backlot. No executive decisions. No fines. No suspensions.

ACTION LEVEL: The beginning, middle, and end of the match took place in three different settings. It started in the backlot, segued into a car chase along with highways of California, and ended in the ring at The Pond. The brawl preceded Undertaker vs. Diesel, but ended after that bout. The two men used bats and running cars and threw each other into windshields and banquet tables. Counting the minutes from beginning to end would make this the longest WrestleMania match in history.

SYNOPSIS: Piper, determined to "make a man" out of Goldust, waited for his foe with a baseball bat. Goldust, arriving in a gold Cadillac, was forced out of his vehicle by Piper, who proceeded to damage both the car and the car's owner with the bat.

After being beaten with the bat and slammed into a table, garbage bin, and car hood, respectively, Goldust decided that enough was enough. He returned to his damaged Cadillac and tried to run down Piper. Failing to execute Plan A, Goldust tried Plan B: Run. He drove away with Piper in hot pursuit, driving a white Ford Bronco.

After an all-too-familiar low-speed chase throughout Anaheim, the two finally entered The Pond. Piper chased Goldust to the ring, determined to finish what he had started. After decimating him with low blows, Piper removed the gold bodysuit to reveal a black thong, bustier, and garter belt ensemble. Piper was vindicated. Goldust was vanquished, if not a tad bit embarrassed.



Piper's short-lived presidency of the WWF was not noted for any major executive decisions, but his beating the pants off Goldust will long be remembered by wrestling fans the world over.

20-MAN INVITATIONAL BATTLE ROYAL

LOCATION: Rosemont Horizon, Rosemont, Illinois

DATE: April 7, 1986

SIGNIFICANCE: Wrestling purists and historians were in a state of outrage. WWF head Vince McMahon Jr. had already gone far enough with the circus atmosphere of WrestleMania I, but this ... this was too much.

What were NFL players doing in the same ring as wrestlers? Wasn't the WWF sending out a message that amateurs can compete with accomplished pro wrestlers? And what was the point? Wasn't this yet another of McMahon's attempts at publicity?

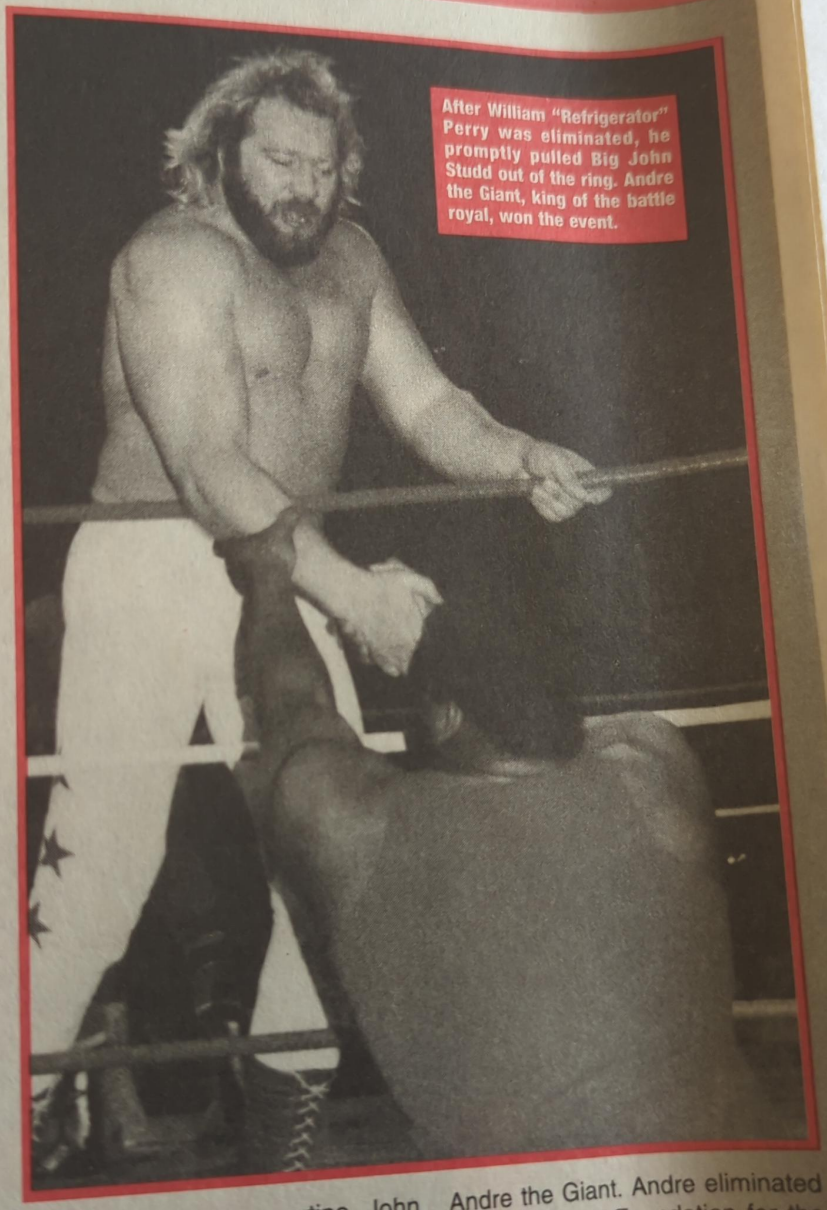
Yes, it was. And, by Vince, it worked.

Many NFL teams were up in arms over their top players competing in such a dangerous event, and that led to increased media coverage. More and more people were exposed to the sport of wrestling for perhaps the first time.

Hundreds of thousands of fans watched the match live. WrestleMania II had a triple main event with matches at Nassau Coliseum, Los Angeles Sports Arena, and Rosemont Horizon, and the WWF had its three-ring circus.

ACTION LEVEL: About what one would expect when 20 oversized athletes are crammed together in one wrestling ring. There was clawing and punching and grabbing and kicking, but very little wrestling. The crowd loved it.

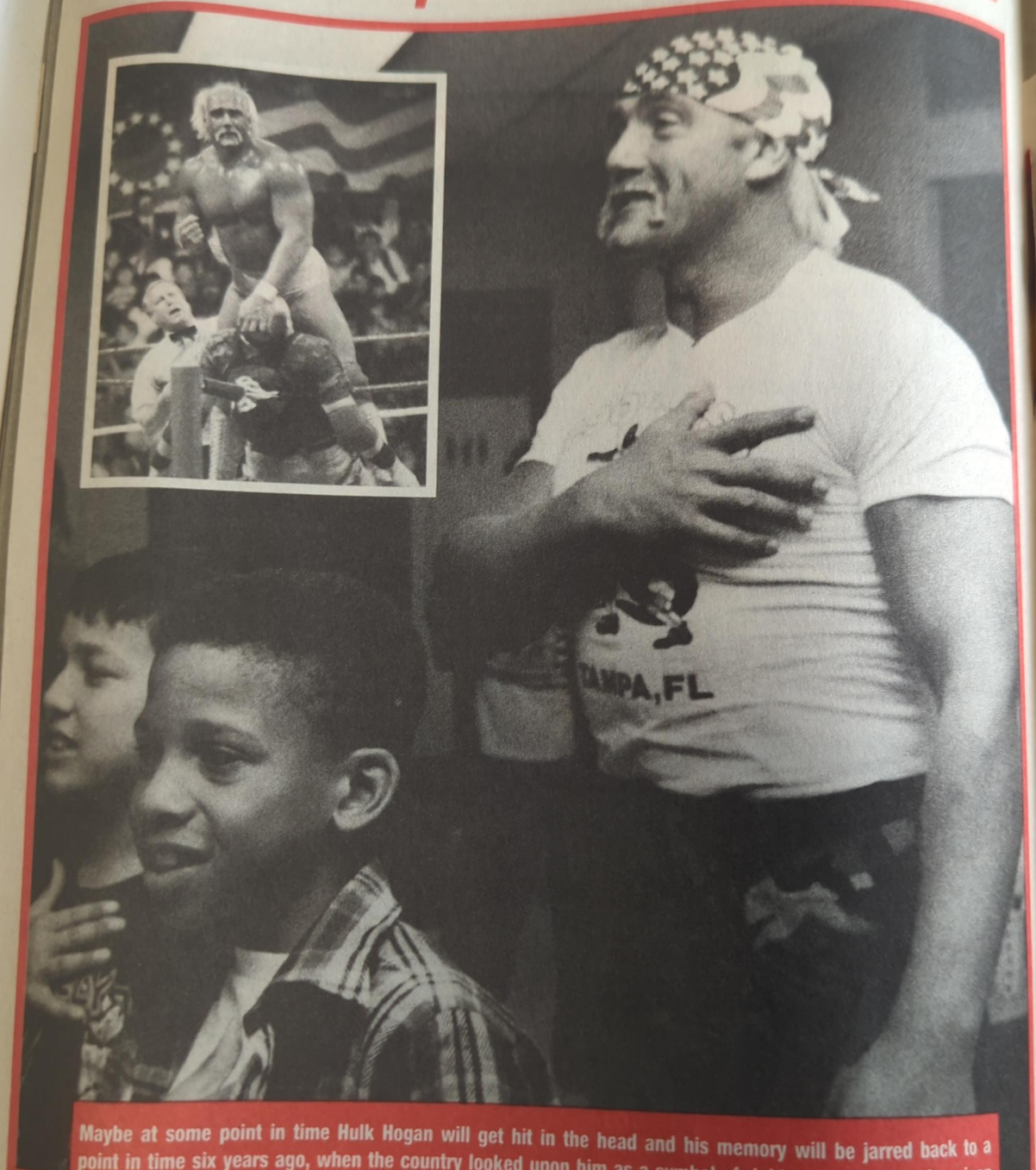
SYNOPSIS: There were football players such as Russ Francis, Refrigerator Perry, Bill Fralic, and Harvey Martin, and great wrestlers such as Bruno Sammartino, John Studd, and The Hart Foundation.



After William "Refrigerator" Perry was eliminated, he promptly pulled Big John Studd out of the ring. Andre the Giant, king of the battle royal, won the event.

But most important of all, there was the greatest battle royal wrestler the sport has ever seen: Andre the Giant. Andre eliminated the hated Hart Foundation for the win and wrestling purists breathed a sigh of relief. At least a wrestler had won. □

HEY, HULK, REMEMBER HIM?



Maybe at some point in time Hulk Hogan will get hit in the head and his memory will be jarred back to a point in time six years ago, when the country looked upon him as a symbol of righteousness while American men and women fought Saddam Hussein's forces in the Persian Gulf. A month before Hogan challenged WWF World champion/Iraqi sympathizer Sgt. Slaughter at WrestleMania VII, the "Hulkster" pledges allegiance to the flag with children of soldiers at the U.S. Army base at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. With the full support of his fans at the Los Angeles Sports Arena, Hogan easily recaptured the WWF World title (inset).

WWF Ratings

For period ending December 23, 1996

WORLD TITLE

RANKING	M	CI	12-IH	THE SKINNY
1. Sid Vicious	+	2	1	He's the man
2. Shawn Michaels	=	7	1	Fan favorite no more?
3. Bret Hart	=	1	1	Still a role model?
4. Steve Austin	+	4	3	He's hearing cheers!
5. The Undertaker	+	16	2	Forget Bearer
6. Mankind	-	4	6	Keep fingers to self
7. Big Van Vader	-	4	2	What happened?
8. Faarooq	=	1	8	Mason's main man
9. Crush	=	1	9	Jailbird!
10. Savio Vega	-	3	8	Barely a threat?

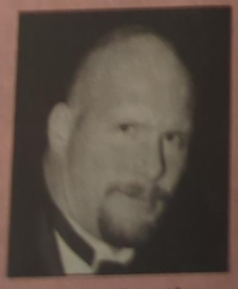
WORLD TAG TEAM

RANKING	M	CI	12-IH	THE SKINNY
1. Owen/Davey Boy	+	2	1	Are they united?
2. Furnas/Lafon	+	1	2	Skilled and experienced
3. Godwinns	-	4	2	Had their chances
4. New Diesel/Razor	=	1	4	Clones don't cut it
5. New Rockers	-	4	4	Don't forget them

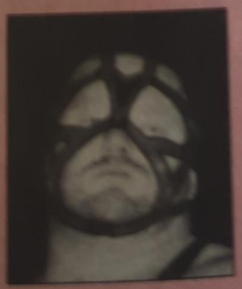
INTERCONTINENTAL

RANKING	M	CI	12-IH	THE SKINNY
1. H.H. Helmsley	+	4	1	Who needs Hennig?
2. Marc Mero	-	4	1	Keep your cool
3. Goldust	+	5	1	Or is it Goodust?
4. Rocky Maivia	=	1	4	Not bad for a rookie
5. Bart Gunn	=	1	5	Oh, brother

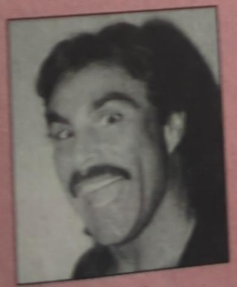
M=momentum; CI=consecutive issues in ratings; 12-IH=12-issue high



Steve Austin

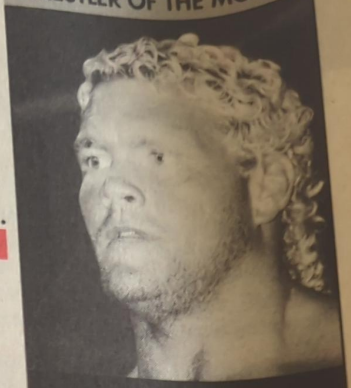


Big Van Vader



Marc Mero

WRESTLER OF THE MONTH



SID VICIOUS

It might not last much longer, but so far "Psycho" Sid Vicious has enjoyed his first reign as WWF World champion.

Why is he enjoying it so much? Because so few people believed he'd win the championship in the first place, let alone successfully defend it as often as he has. Few gave him much of a chance to beat Shawn Michaels for the belt, but he did that (with the help of a TV camera). Almost no one thought he'd pin Bret Hart at In Your House XII, but he did that, too (with an inadvertent assist from Michaels).

Mixed in were defenses against Steve Austin, Faarooq, The Undertaker, The Sultan, and Big Van Vader, among others. In matches against each one of those men, Sid found a way to leave the ring with the belt.

"All these great wrestlers think they can outwrestle 'Psycho' Sid," he said, "but all it takes is one power bomb to shut them up."

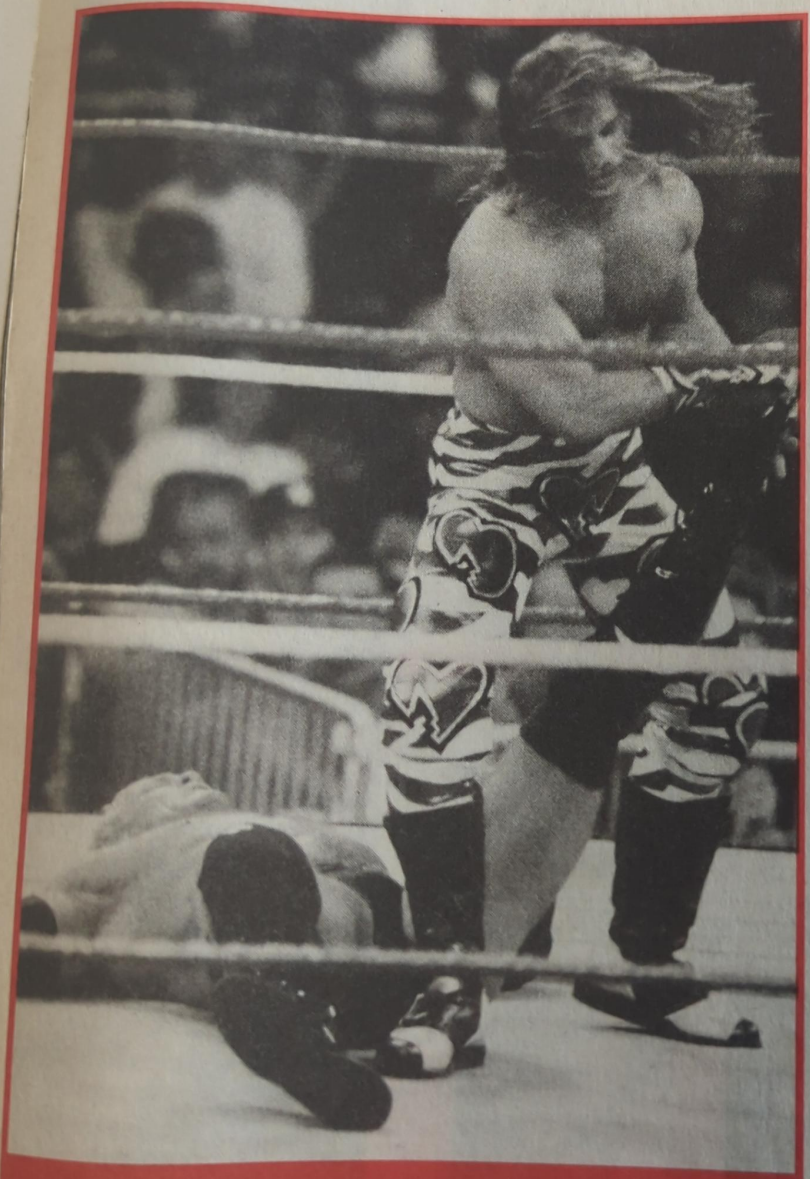
"Psycho" Sid, champion of the world—who would have believed it?

Newsline

WWF

By Bryan Ethier

IT IS LIKE having to choose between the plain, dutiful, yet faithful girl who had been your steady for two years, and the exciting, on-the-edge, flashy, leggy cheerleader who dazzled your libido but offered little in the way of a long-term relationship.



Shawn Michaels lost the WWF World title to Sid Vicious at Survivor Series, but Sid isn't the rival about whom "The Heartbreak Kid" is most concerned.

It's **Bret Hart** vs. **Shawn Michaels**, the faithful companion vs. the dazzling cheerleader.

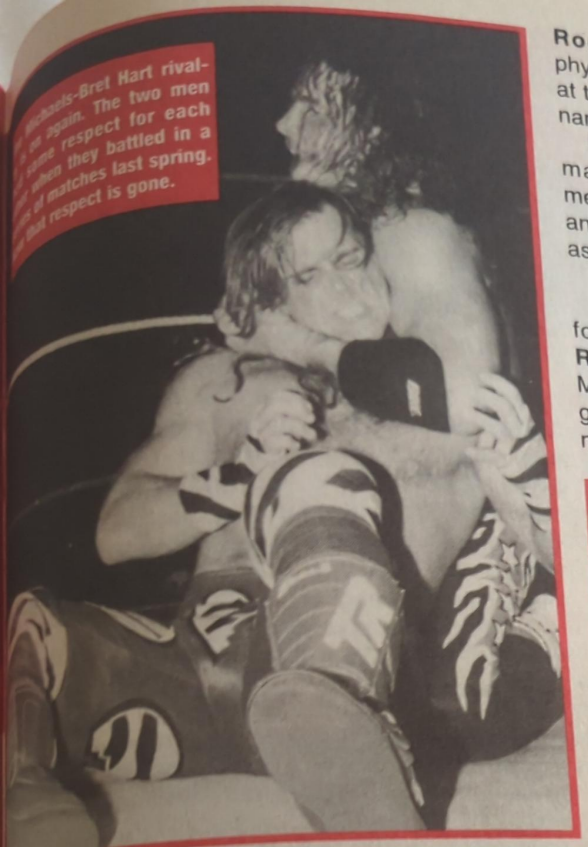
I couldn't help making that analogy while watching the Survivor Series. As Michaels went down to defeat to **"Psycho" Sid Vicious**, I felt like that high school senior bidding goodbye to the once-in-a-million relationship with the most popular girl in the school. And as I quietly watched Bret rally to defeat **"Stone-Cold" Steve Austin**, I was reminded of the feeling I had 20 years ago when I made the choice of the old steady over the prom queen.

Yes, the Survivor Series was bittersweet for many wrestling observers. It seems hard to believe that we will no longer see the flashy Michaels as ambassador for the WWF. We'll miss his bravado, his smile and swagger, his zeal to be the most popular and most successful wrestler of all-time. Personally, I'll miss the way he wrestled as champion. I cannot recall a wrestler who could dazzle an audience with his natural athleticism and skill as did Michaels. But who's to say he won't regain that WWF title?

It has been two years since I shared pasta and greens with Shawn at a Hartford restaurant just a few months before WrestleMania XI. He was bold and brash then, frustrated that **Diesel** was getting all the attention in the WWF.

Much has happened to Shawn Michaels since that January 1995 day.

Same goes for Bret Hart. Watching Survivor Series, I felt like I was welcoming back a long-time friend. He



...Michaels-Bret Hart rivalry is on again. The two men have respect for each other when they battled in a series of matches last spring. Now that respect is gone.

lacks Shawn's brash charm, but he's a role model who takes this sport—and this federation—seriously. He is the reason I don't turn off the TV when my young daughters enter the living room.

Now, after Shawn inadvertently helped Sid beat Bret at In Your House XII and Bret beat up Shawn afterward, it's like a three-way tug-o'-war for the WWF title. All three say they'll do anything to get the belt, and I wouldn't bet against Bret coming out with the belt in the end.

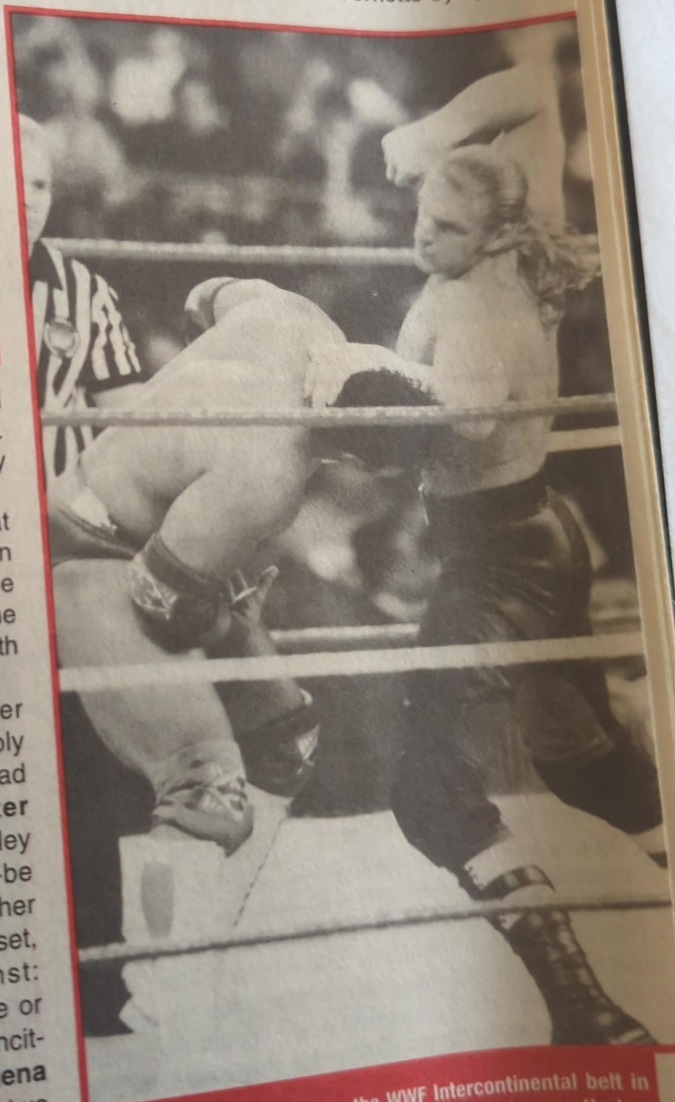
The Intercontinental title? Well, that's another story. By rights, **Ahmed Johnson** should probably still be I-C titleholder. But that's old news. We had **Marc Mero** for about a month; now it's **Hunter Hearst Helmsley**. Who's next? Now that Helmsley has proven he can beat Mero, the powers-that-be should find a way to get him and **Faarooq** together for a title match. If Faarooq could pull off the upset, guess who he would defend the title against: Johnson. This could be a truly great rivalry if one or the other snapped up the I-C belt. HHH recently incited **Goldust**, though, by making passes at **Marlena** before In Your House XII, so we could see those two feud for quite a while.

If Survivor Series proved one thing, it demonstrated that yesterday's *nobody* could become today's star. Sid is one example of that axiom. The other is **Rocky Maivia**, a high-flying acrobat with the physique of a college defensive lineman (he did play at the University of Miami) and the smile and countenance of a California surfer.

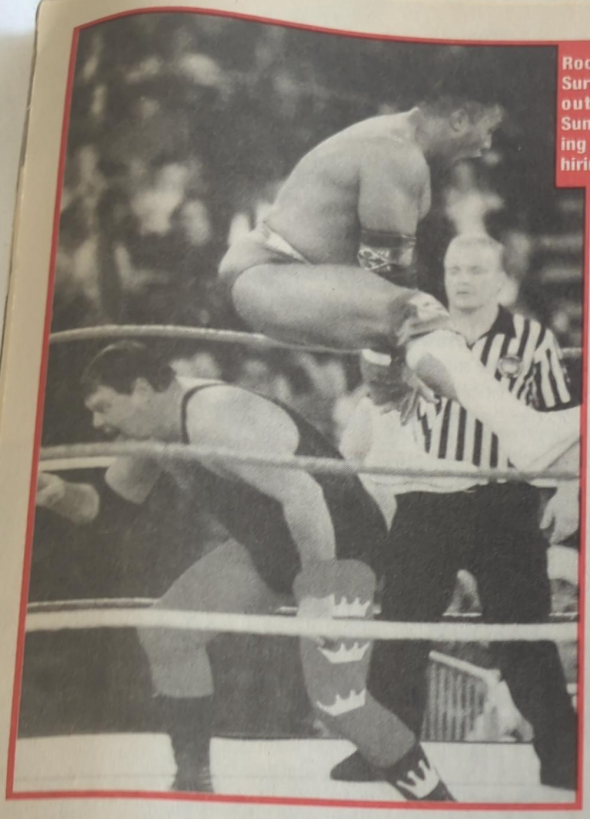
Maivia pinned both **Crush** and Goldust in an eight-man elimination match at Survivor Series. Immediately after the bout, WWF head **Vince McMahon** and the evening's announcers were heralding Maivia as the next WWF superstar.

After just one match!

But Maivia is different that the average upstart. A former USWA tag team champ, he is the son of **Rocky Johnson** and grandson of **Peter Maivia**. Maivia has already caught **Sunny's** eye, but can she get her hooks around his neck? Many insiders hope not. He has already enraged **Jim Cornette** by ripping



Hunter Hearst Helmsley has the WWF Intercontinental belt in his possession now, but maybe not for much longer. He has Goldust to worry about.



Rocky Maivia made his WWF debut at Survivor Series and looked, quite frankly, outstanding. Both Jim Cornette and Sunny have expressed interest in managing him, but he has shown no interest in hiring any manager.

up a contract he offered to him.

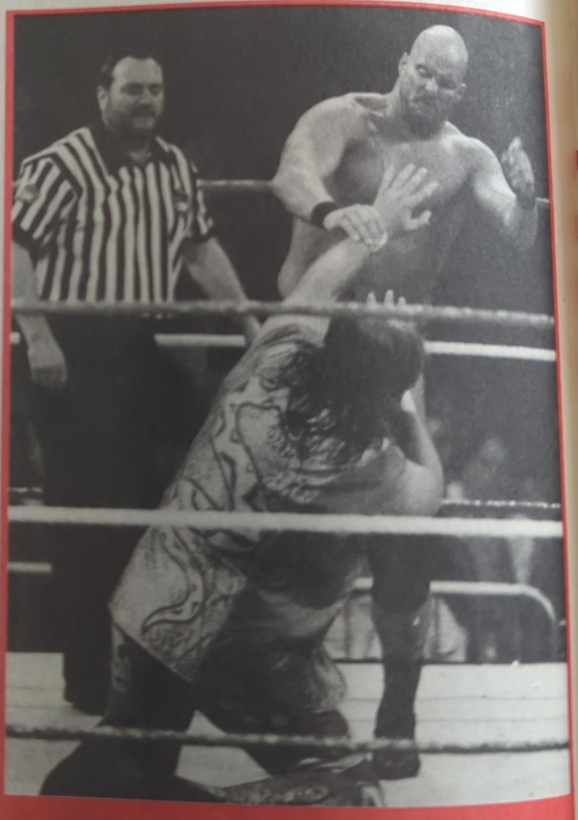
Quick hits: **Barry Windham** turned rulebreaker in December when he helped **Justin "Hawk" Bradshaw** attack **Henry** and **Phineas Godwinn** ... It appears the relationship between **Paul Bearer** and **The Executioner** is over. Disgusted that Executioner lost a match to Goldust at a TV taping, Bearer hit his man with the urn and walked away from him ... Say it ain't so. **The Honky Tonk Man** has returned to the WWF as a broadcaster, but already people in the WWF are saying he wants to go after the I-C title again ... AAA stars **Pierroth Jr.** and **Cibernetico** have made their WWF debut and made it clear they want to win the WWF World tag team title from **Owen Hart** and **Davey Boy Smith**.

That brings us to the What Will Become Of Dept. Where will the "British Bulldog" be in another few months? Davey Boy rushed to Bret Hart's aid during Bret's match with Owen in November and prevented Steve Austin from hitting Bret with a folding chair. Smith, concerned that Austin was injuring his brother-in-law, intervened, upbraiding Austin for the dangerous and uncalled for attack. Smith also chastised Owen for his participation in the underhanded assailing of Bret.

Austin is proving to be a hot commodity and one of the federation's outstanding grapplers. His loss to Hart at Survivor Series was damaging to his career in the short run, for he desperately needed a victory over one of the league's elite wrestlers. Where does he go from here? Probably back at Hart, and back at Hart again. Overlooked in Austin's success is his perseverance; in fact, you can expect Austin to become meaner, sharper, and stronger in the upcoming weeks. In the long run, he could benefit from his heartbreaking loss to Bret, if he learns from the defeat.

"Stone-Cold," however, suffered a humiliating loss at a WWF TV taping in December. He challenged young **Jason Ahrndt** and a partner of his choice to a handicap match, and Ahrndt chose young **Ed Jackie**. Austin used two "Stone-Cold stunners" on Jackie, but Davey Boy then got involved and clotheslined Austin when the referee wasn't looking. Seconds later, Ahrndt pinned him! Just what Austin needed—something to make him even angrier.

Austin would probably love to see Bret Hart win the WWF title. That way he could beat *Bret* for it. Could happen. □



Steve Austin punishes Jake Roberts with a kick to the ribs. Austin could be secretly hoping that Bret Hart soon captures the WWF title. That way he might get a chance to beat "The Hitman" for the belt.

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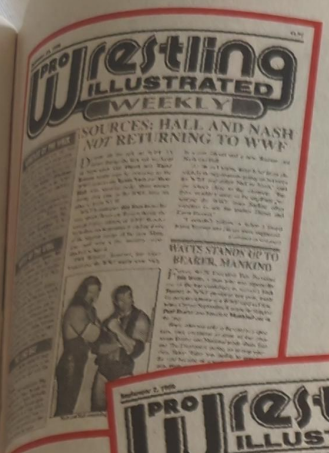

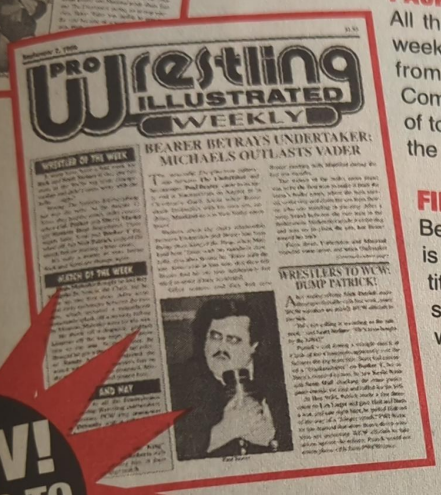

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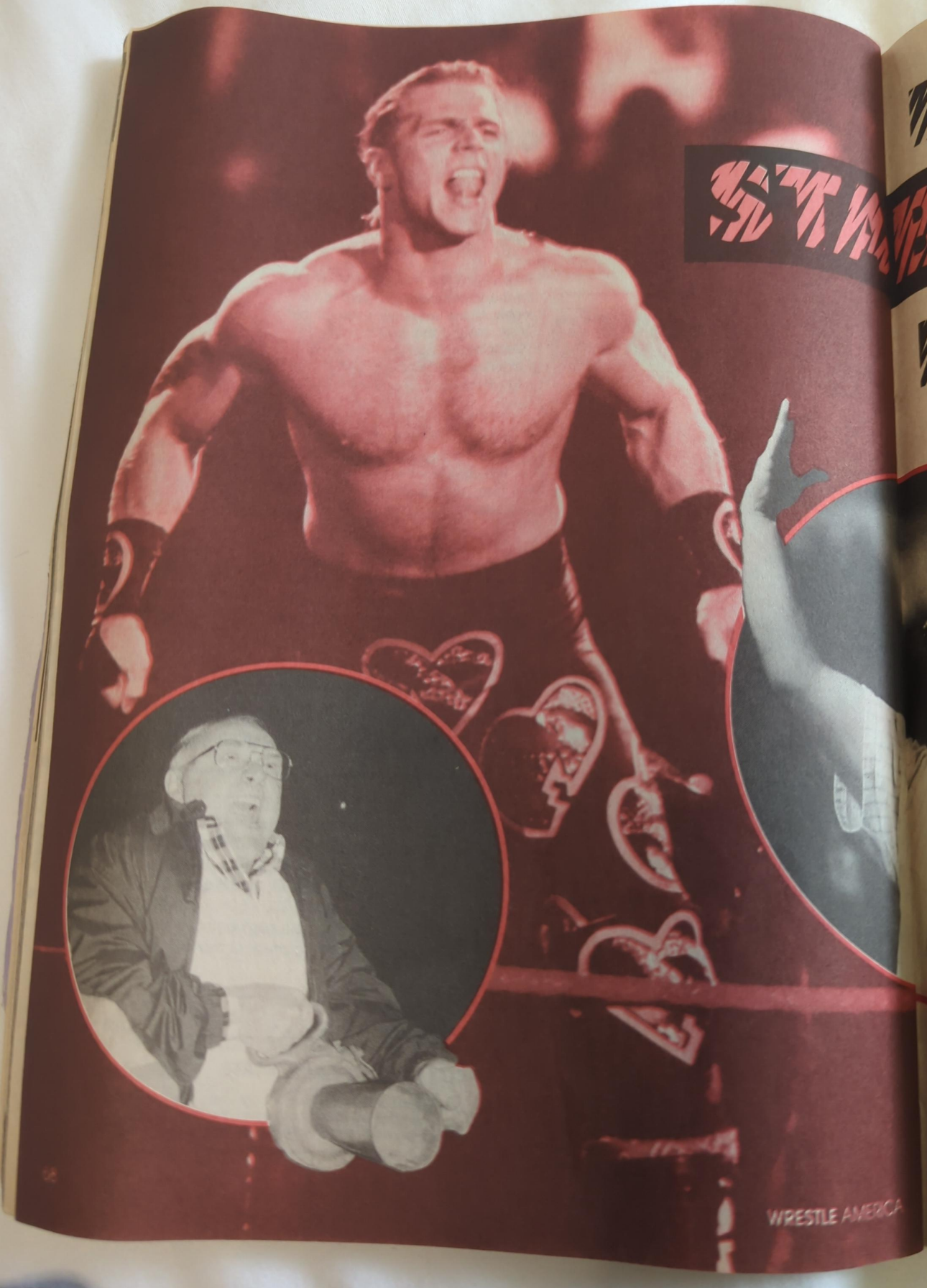


WRESTLE AMERICA

Spring/19

WWF: THE FANS VERSUS SHAWN IN THE BACK?

Back at WrestleMania XII, he was the conquering hero, the man who finally made his lifelong dream a reality. But lately some fans have grown tired of Shawn Michaels' sexy boy image. Why?

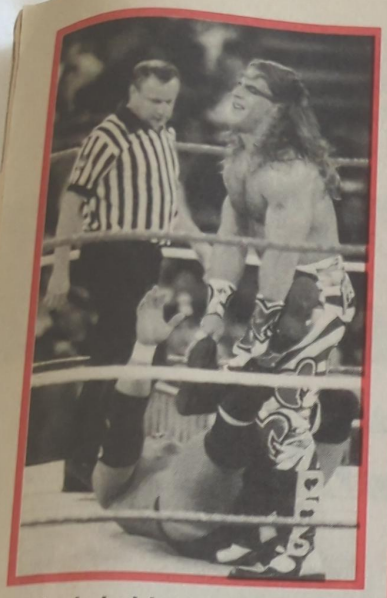
By Bryan Ethier

SHAWN MICHAELS' FIRST reign as WWF champ officially ended at the 1996 Survivor Series. But his undoing began months ago, when the popular champ began to hear boos from a partisan audience.

He was always a champion who thrived under the glow of the spotlights, who shined brightest when his fans lavished him with adoration. He was the spoiled four-year-old who constantly required attention. But when the cheers began to turn to boos, Shawn Michaels slowly began to turn, like a spurned lover.

Michaels' fall from grace came so gradually, so slowly, that it hardly seemed noticeable. Unless you paid attention to his mood swings, his frustration with trivialities such as poor ring lighting and wrong ringside music.

The frustrations of defending his belt against warriors such as Mankind, Big Van Vader, Goldust, Davey Boy Smith, and Owen Hart began to take their toll. The weight of the WWF made him sag. But what finally chipped away at Michaels' soul was an



Michaels had beaten "Psycho" Sid numerous times prior to their Survivor Series showdown. Who knows–the match might have turned out different had so many fans not turned against "The Heartbreak Kid."

opponent removed from the spotlight, a nemesis whose long-reaching shadow led to Michaels' ultimate undoing.

Bret Hart. "The Excellence Of Execution," the model of excellence, the standard of integrity. Even during Hart's eight-month semi-retirement from wrestling, he managed to wedge a pin between Michaels and Michaels' fans.

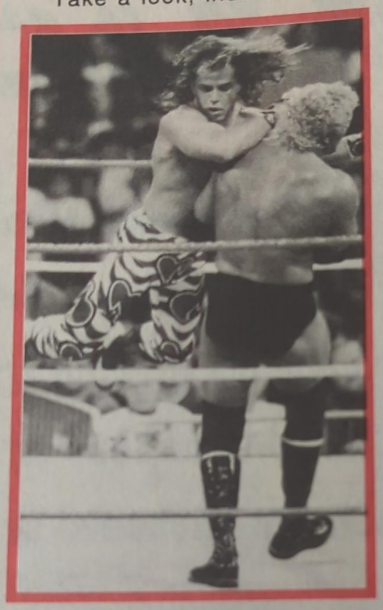
Like Dole vs. Clinton, Hart vs. Michaels became a debate over integrity—"The Heartbreak Kid's" integrity.

"Bret was successful at swaying the fans away from Shawn because he questioned Shawn as a role model," said broadcaster Dok Hendrix. "The fact that Shawn never turned down a match, that Shawn was arguably the most popular champion ever, well, that never stopped Bret from questioning Shawn's motives. He disapproved of the way Shawn constantly called attention to himself. His disapproval of Shawn's public behavior had something to do with this."

Of course, the great irony is that Hart betrayed his own standard of integrity by judging his fellow man. In a manner of speaking, Bret Hart was Shawn Michaels' judge and executioner.

"There is no doubt in my mind that Shawn Michaels got a raw deal from the fans and from Bret Hart," remarked Aldo Montoya. "Take a look at his loss to Sid. What was Shawn doing at the time Sid pinned him?"

Take a look, indeed, for the



Overall, Shawn's performance against Sid was pretty good. He had little trouble countering Sid's advantages in size and strength. Unfortunately, he seemed a little thrown off by the boos he heard.

conclusion of that shocking match paints a different picture of Shawn: It shows a man with priorities, a man who weighs friendship over a title.

That night, as thousands of fans booed Michaels, "The Heartbreak Kid" betrayed the title in order to rescue his mentor, Jose Lothario. Toward the end of the match, Sid knocked Lothario off the ring apron with a TV camera. Michaels had Sid at his mercy after delivering a superkick. But rather than pin Sid, Michaels immediately rushed to Lothario's side.

Sid, seeing, sensing, and smelling the intoxicating allure of gold, attacked Michaels with the camera. He finished him off with a power bomb, sending the Madison Square Garden crowd reeling.

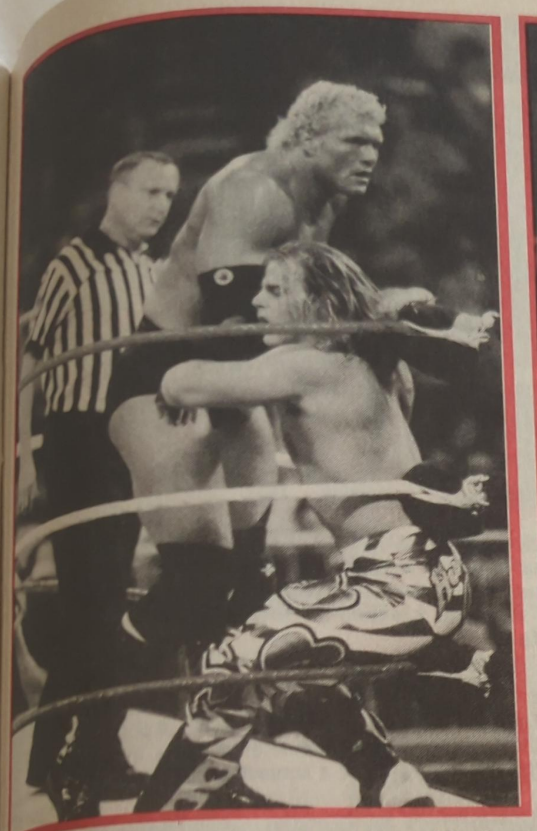
While the turncoat fans simultaneously cheered Sid and booed Michaels, Michaels again showed his true colors. He quickly returned to Lothario's aid.

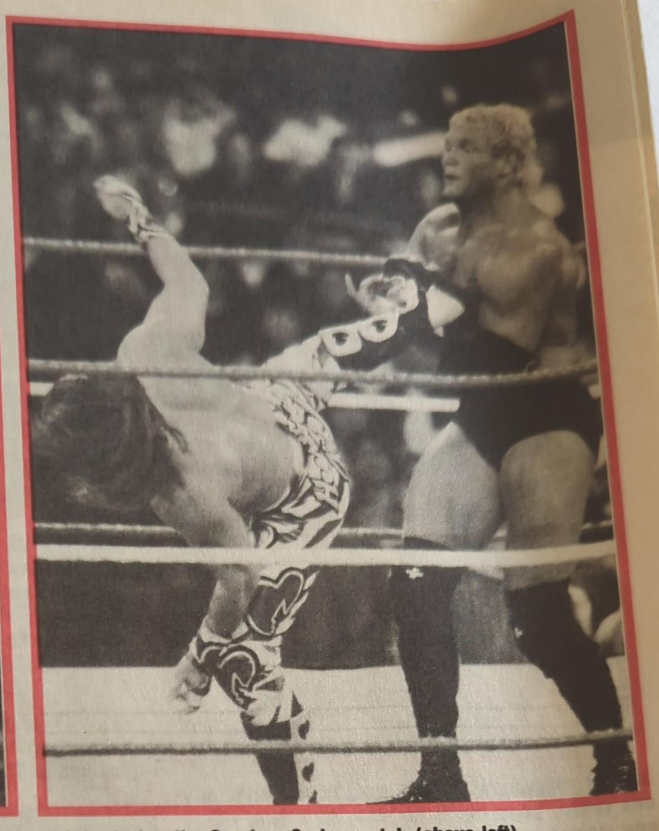
The next day, he and Lothario were back in San Antonio, Texas. Sid was champ; Michaels was salving his manager's emotional wounds.

"It's shocking," said Marc Mero. "I'm astounded that Sid won, yes. But I'm even more impressed with the way Shawn handled himself. I just wish these fans would have treated him with a little more respect. Maybe Bret Hart did have something to do with their reaction to him that night. The boos really threw him off."

Hart said very little about

A year ago, who would have thought fans would be upset by the sight of Shawn Michaels dominating Sid in the ring? Perhaps Bret Hart *is* to blame for all this.





Even though Sid had Shawn in trouble at some points during the Survivor Series match (above left), Shawn was in position to win after hitting with him with a superkick (above right). Instead of going for a pin, though, he went to help Jose Lothario. And he gets booed for that?

Michaels' loss. He also refused publicly comment on his role in Michaels' demise.

"Bret respects Shawn as a wrestler, but obviously he does not respect Shawn as a role model at all," said Bruce Hart, Bret's brother. "You have to understand how seriously Bret takes his role as a leader. He considers the job of WWF champion to be like the role of the Pope in the Catholic Church."

WWF head Vince McMahon tried to downplay Michaels' loss while emphasizing Michaels' contributions to the federation. The following night on *Monday Night Raw*, he called Michaels "a great champion and a great man." Clearly, by the look of dismay on his face, McMahon was distraught over Michaels' loss.

"This situation reminds me of what just happened with the Notre Dame football team," observed psychologist Dr. Sidney M. Basil. "Everyone gets tired of the status quo, and they think change for the sake of change is good. Wait until next fall. Notre Dame football fans will finally realize why they liked Lou Holtz so much. They will miss him greatly. The same goes for Shawn; his legacy as champ will elevate him to icon status."

As Michaels returns to the ring, he'll have to battle to regain the respect and favor of the fans. Demographically, the male audience has proven to be his Achilles heel. Hart, and many other white-collar fans, have publicly decried Michaels' hip-swinging, cocky tactics. To this audience, only "The Excellence Of Execution" possesses the proper demeanor and talents.

By criticizing Michaels, Bret implanted the idea in fans' minds that Michaels was bad for wrestling. Shawn could not deal with the rejection, and slowly, over a period of months, he developed an adversarial relationship with some fans.

It cost him the title and some respect.

It also showed the wrestling world that he was human, after all. That all the videos and pictures in *Playgirl* were meaningless when compared to friendship. When cliques inside the wrestling community betrayed Michaels, Michaels closed his eyes to them and walked away.

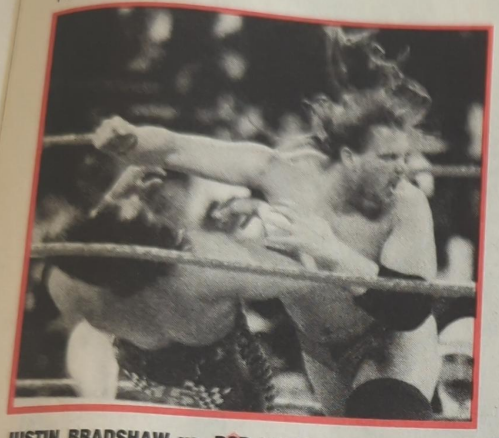
As soon as the fans began to boo Michaels, he began to change. Now their relationship with him might never be the same. □

Focus on...

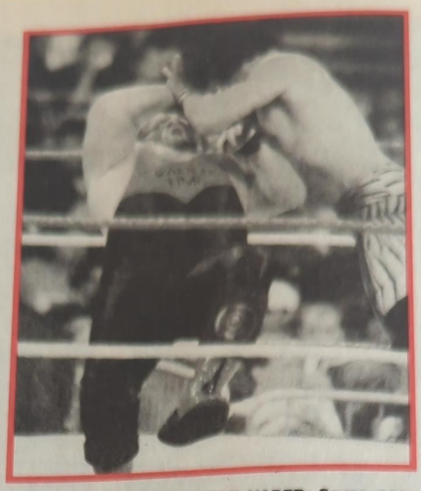
SURVIVOR SERIES

Photos by Bill Apter

WWF

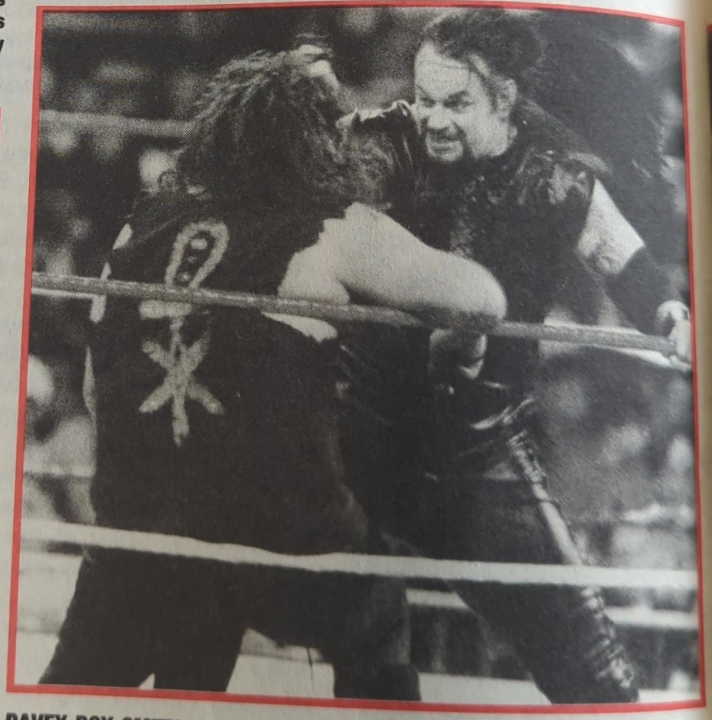


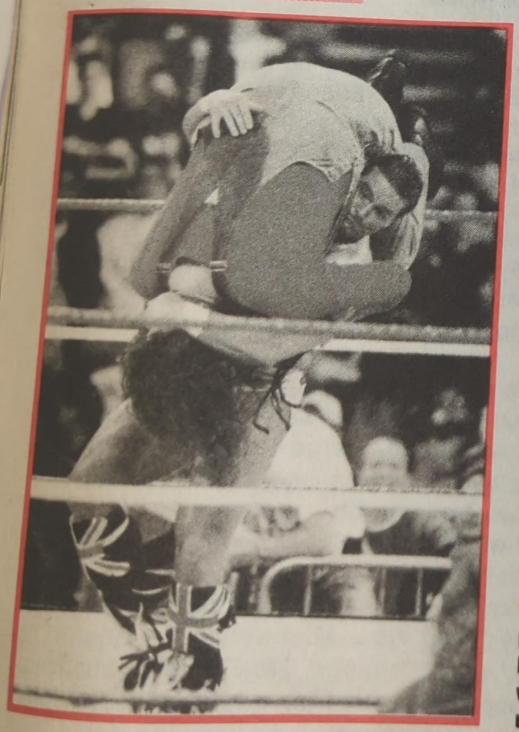
JUSTIN BRADSHAW vs. BOB HOLLY: Bradshaw is one ornery Texan–that's for sure. All it took was one vicious clothesline to knock Holly completely off his feet and send him crashing to the mat.



JIMMY SNUKA vs. BIG VAN VADER: Some people said Snuka, a new inductee into the WWF Hall of Fame, should have retired years ago. Not Vader, who was knocked for a loop by "The Superfly."

THE UNDERTAKER vs. MANKIND: Another WWF pay-per-view, another 'Taker-Mankind match. Undertaker should know by now that a few punches to the face won't phase a masochist like Mankind.





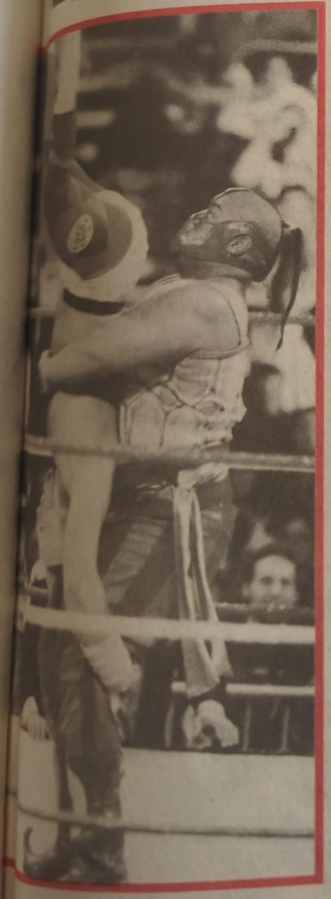
DAVEY BOY SMITH vs. PHINEAS GODWINN: That's a bad position to be in, and Phineas knows it all too well. When Davey Boy Smith powerslams you, it usually takes a little while for you to get up.

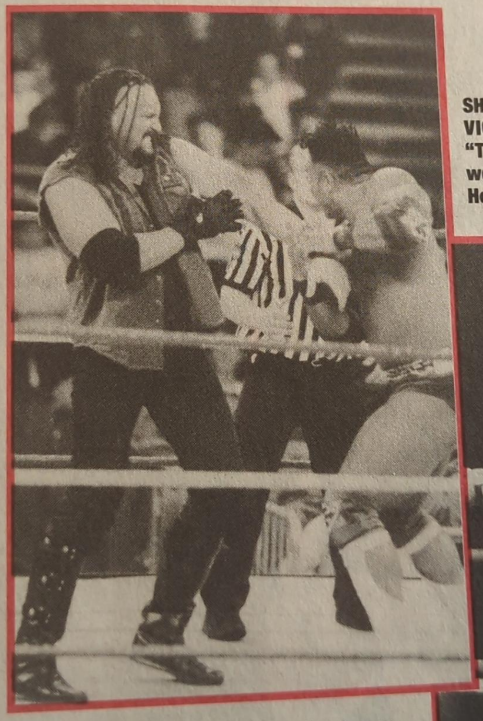
THE SULTAN vs. Sultan favors the finishing hold, learned how to mean piledriver.

STEVE AUSTIN vs. BRET HART: Punch, bite, gouge–"Stone-Cold" will do whatever it takes to hurt "The Hitman" and hurt him bad. Driving a boot into his throat worked well, too.

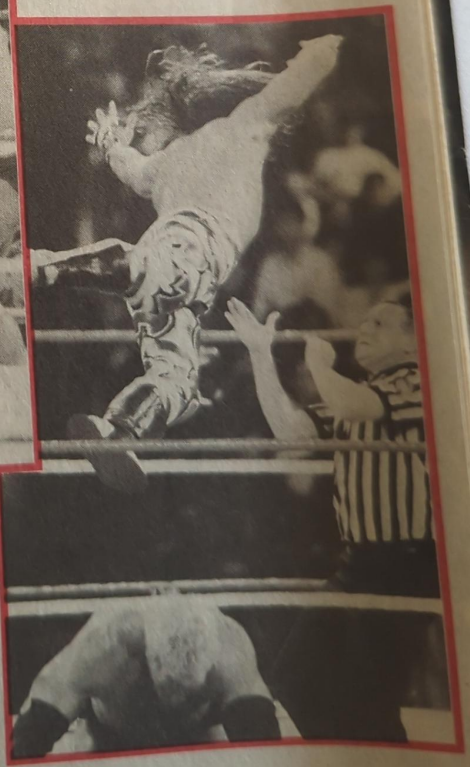
BARRY WINDHAM vs. GOLDUST: This was Windham's first pay-per-view match since 1994, and although he still looked a little rusty, his running clothesline was as effective as it has ever been.

THE SULTAN vs. ALDO MONTOYA: Sultan favors the camel clutch as his finishing hold, but he has also learned how to execute a pretty mean piledriver.





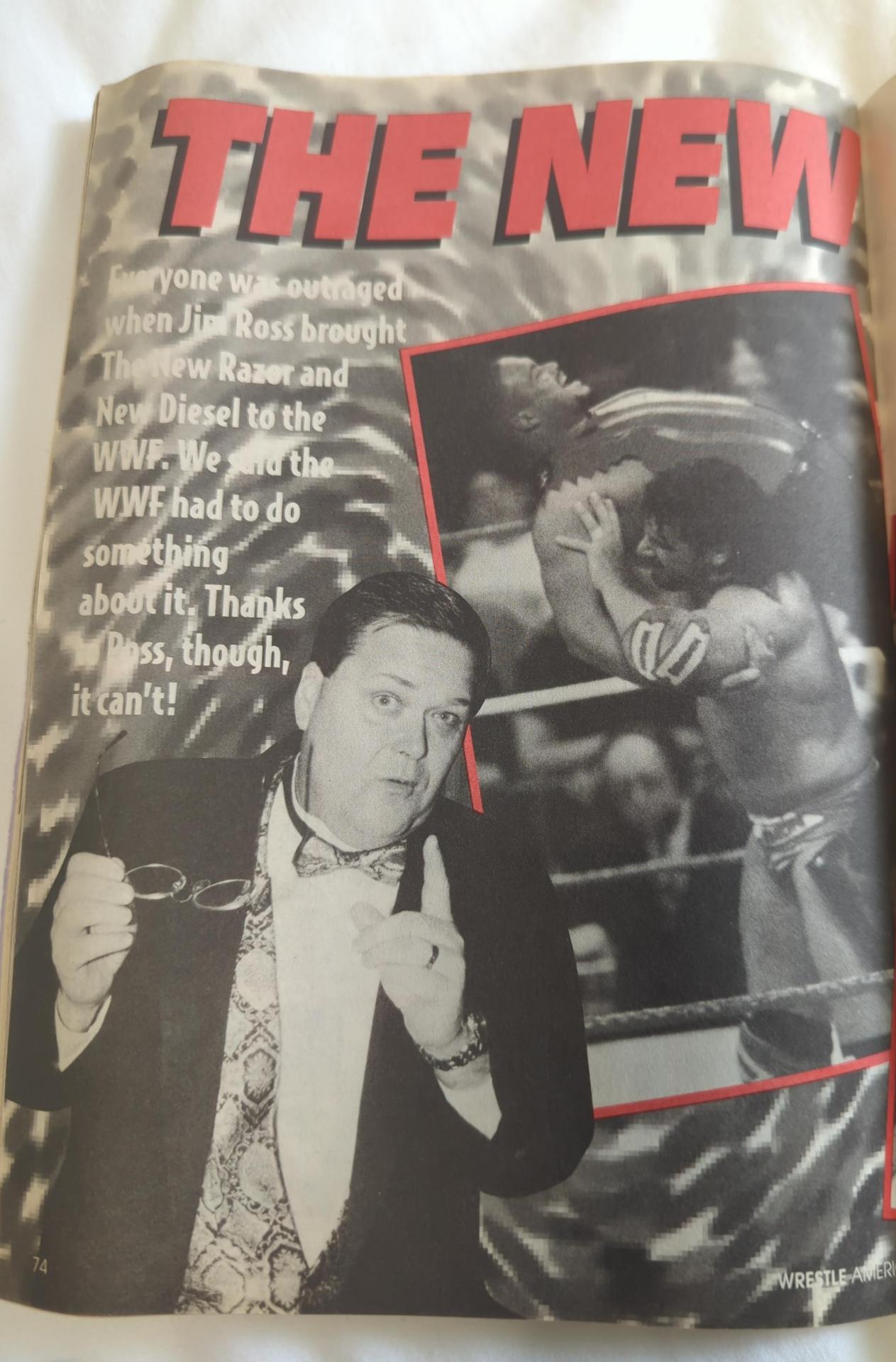
SHAWN MICHAELS vs. "PSYCHO" SID VICIOUS: This flying bodypress by "The Heartbreak Kid" would have worked very well had referee Dave Hebner been Shawn's opponent.



CRUSH vs. ROCKY MAIVIA: The best way to neutralize the strength of a big man like Crush isn't to try to outpunch him. No, what you want to do is what Maivia did–try to outwrestle him with wrist-locks and other holds.

THE NEW

Everyone was outraged when Jim Ross brought The New Razor and New Diesel to the WWF. We said the WWF had to do something about it. Thanks Ross, though, it can't!



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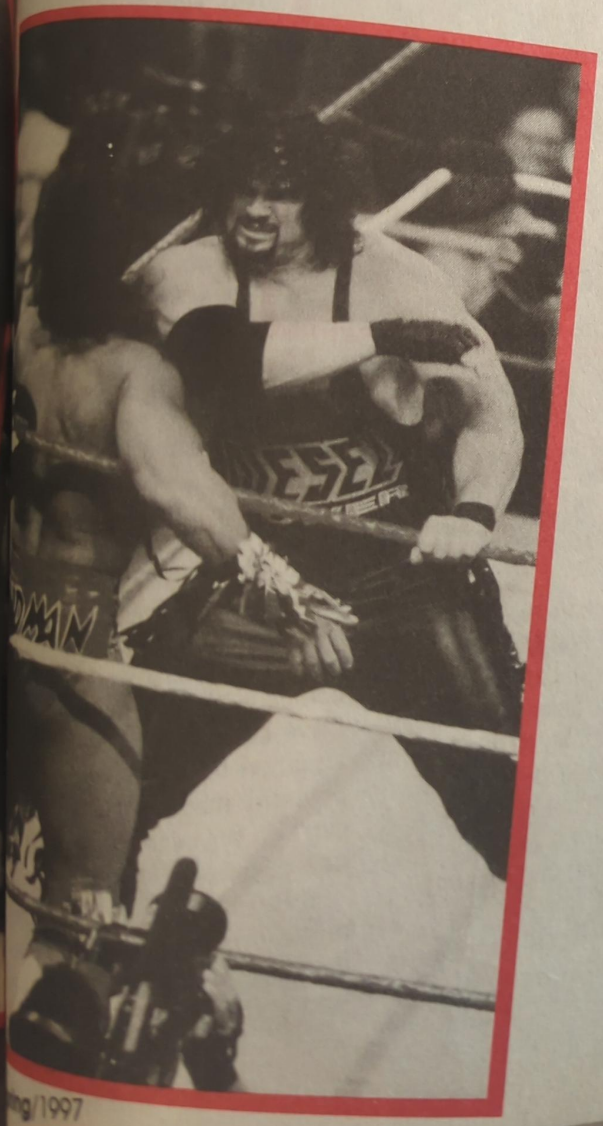
RAZOR & DIESEL:

Why The WWF Is Powerless To Stop Them



By Bryan Ethier

WHY ARE WE even discussing this? Why are we even mentioning The New Diesel and The New Razor Ramon?

Because the laws of journalism mandate that members of the press report on the lives of public figures. And the laws of wrestling journalism mandate that we report on prominent wrestlers in prominent federations.

But we'd rather write that Santa moved Christmas to August because he couldn't afford a new winter suit.

We can't say that, unfortunately. We must inform the wrestling community that The New Diesel and The New Razor are still in the WWF. Are they thriving? They're doing okay. Moreover, some people wonder, who cares? They're not the originals, and they'll never be as good or as popular as the originals.

Jim Ross cares, that's who. Pure and simple, The New Razor and The New Diesel are Ross' creation, just as the scarred monster was the cre-

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ORLD OF
WRESTLING!

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Obtain The Proper Training
Reputable Wrestling Schools
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N' THE MAT" is THE Source for
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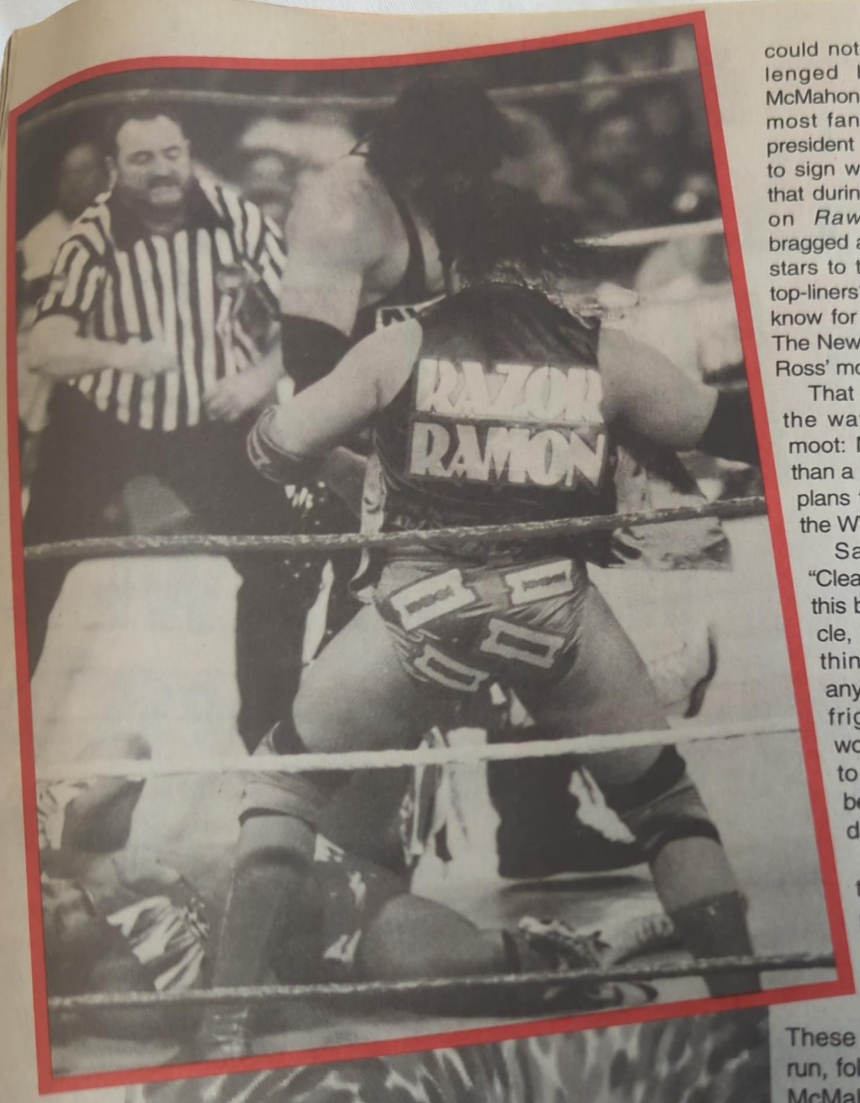


If The New Diesel and New Razor constantly sneak-attack and double-team unsuspecting fan favorites, they could be subject to suspension. That's about the strongest action the WWF can take against them.

ation of Dr. Frankenstein.

Yes, moms and dads, boys and girls, good ol' J.R. hoodwinked us. No, he didn't pull the wool over our eyes by promising the return of Kevin Nash and Scott Hall; he buffaloed us by bringing back the "characters" of Razor and "Big Daddy Cool" Diesel. He brought us an empty Christmas gift, wrapped pretty, with bows and clear tape. The packages appear similar on the outside, but they lack the soul and heart of the *real* Razor and Diesel.

But this has been said before and before. Let's not belabor the point; let's not lend credibility to this brilliant marketing job done by Ross. For, clearly, the recreation of Razor and Diesel is as brilliant a slight of hand as any magic act perpetrated by David Copperfield.

The beauty of Ross' scheme is that he knew beforehand that he could not and would not be challenged by WWF head Vince McMahon. You see, unbeknownst to most fans, Ross is a WWF vice president and, as such, is permitted to sign wrestlers. You might recall that during his now-famous diatribe on *Raw* in September, Ross bragged about bringing a number of stars to the WWF. Who are these top-liners? Only McMahon and Ross know for sure. Doubtless, however, The New Diesel and New Razor are Ross' most controversial finds.

That neither is impressing fans the way Hall and Nash have is moot: ND and NR are little more than a product through which Ross plans to solidify his position within the WWF.

Said a WWF informant: "Clearly, if Jim Ross could pull off this bizarre public relations debacle, he could do just about anything. He could bring almost anyone to the WWF. That is a frightening notion, and you wonder if McMahon might want to pull in Ross' leash a little before Ross does incalculable damage to the federation."

The pen is truly mightier the sword, as Ross has proven. His signature accompanies those of New Diesel and New Razor on the grapplers' iron-clad contracts. These guys are here for the long-run, folks. Even the mighty sword of McMahon cannot strike them from each night's lineup.

"Great—more mediocrity, just what the WWF needs right now," lamented Barry Green, 44, a long-time WWF fan.

"I think it just goes to show the direction Ross wants to take this company," remarked Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker. "This is a dangerous situation for the WWF. Ross is a powerful man right now, and they can't do anything at all about these new guys."

If Ross' plan is to recycle characters by using mid-card wrestlers, then all of wrestling is likely to suffer. And you can bet the philosophical

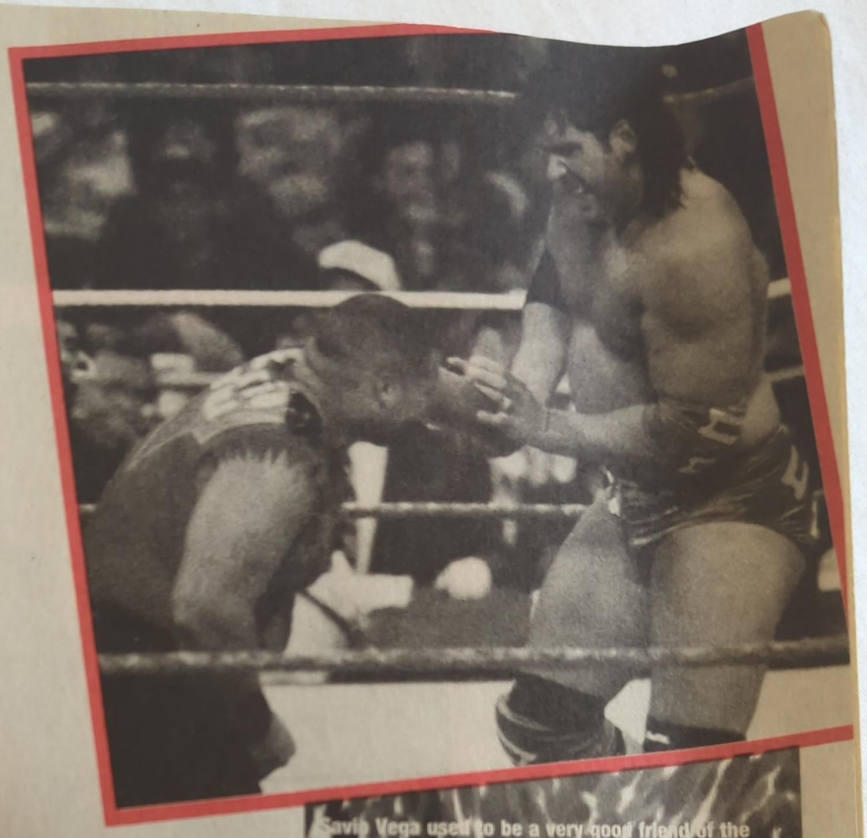
chasm that exists between Ross and McMahon will widen until a major quake occurs in the federation.

The question is this: What can Vince McMahon do about Ross' treacherous actions? He cannot allow Ross to wield unlimited power, to sign any clowns—literally—he sees fit. There's no denying the fact that Ross has a very good eye for wrestling talent, but given too much power, and given the fact that he is somewhat bitter toward McMahon, is he really the man the WWF wants to have out there offering people contracts?

Several WWF insiders have told WRESTLE AMERICA that the WWF regrets some of the actions of Ross and is doing everything it possibly can to "rectify the situation."

So what. What exactly does "rectify the situation" mean?

Obviously, Ross has a contract with the WWF and is not planning on going anywhere. Would McMahon get rid of him? Probably not, since he has already done that before and had to be a little embarrassed when Ross went public with the details on *Raw* this September. The New Diesel and New Razor are staying, too. But the image of either of them wearing gold belts around their waists is unnerving.

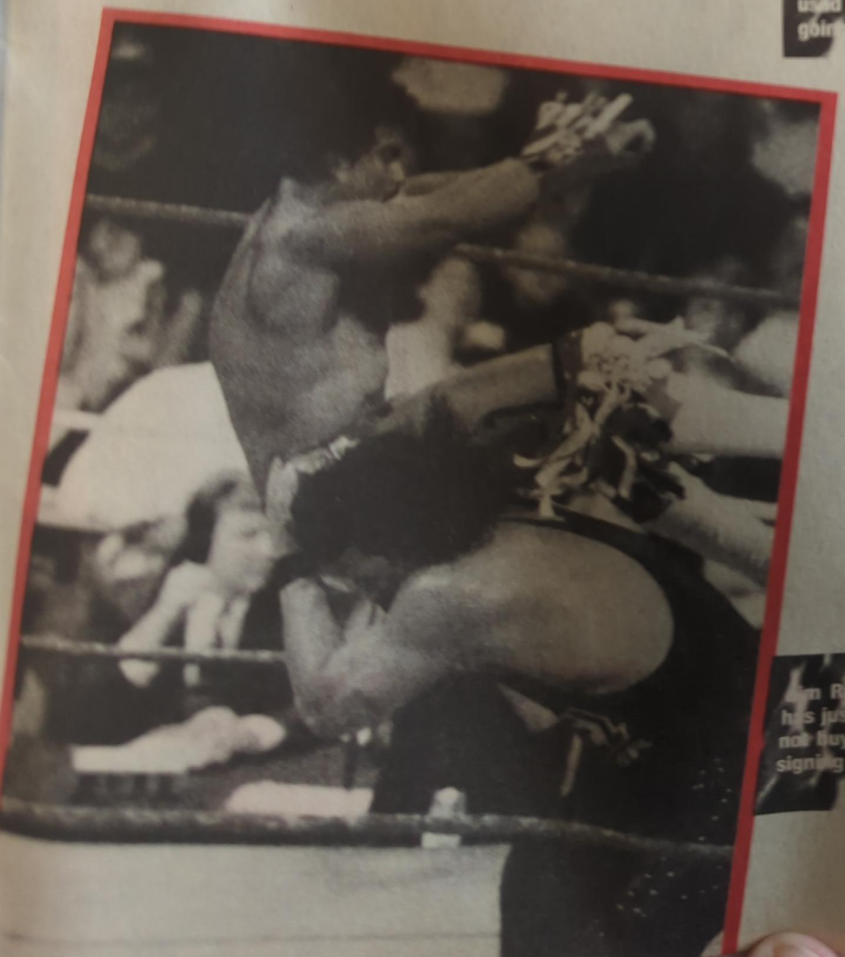


Savio Vega used to be a very good friend of the original Razor Ramon, Scott Hall, but he doesn't much like The New Razor. He had better get used to seeing him, because this impostor isn't going anywhere.

More terrifying is the idea that, under Ross, we might one day have the Stepford Federation, a wrestling league of impostors.

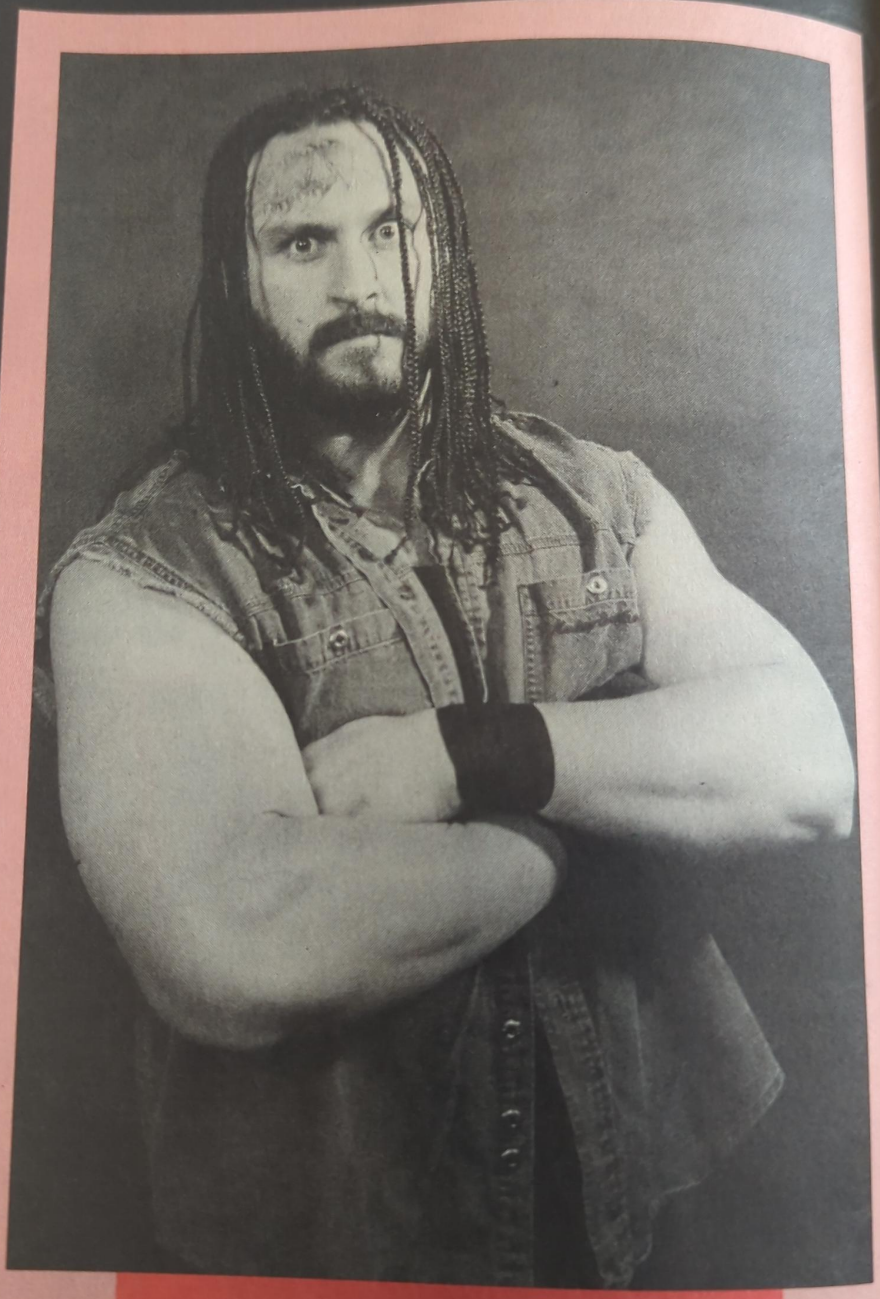
Diesels and Razors in name only.

Then the World Wrestling Federation would exist in name only. Perhaps by the year 1998, only Jim Ross will be real. □



Jim Ross would like us to believe The New Diesel has just as good a "jackknife" as the original. We're not buying it. We think he made a big mistake in signing him and New Razor to iron-clad deals.

WWF Data Bank

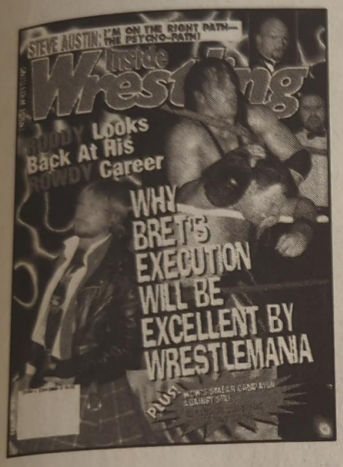


CRUSH

HEIGHT: 6'6"
WEIGHT: 322
HOMETOWN: Kona, HI
MAJOR TITLES HELD: NWA Pacific Northwest (1990, 1991); NWA Pacific Northwest tag team (with The Grappler, 1989; with Steve Doll, 1991)
BIGGEST STRENGTHS: Raw power, bad attitude
BIGGEST WEAKNESS: Lack of quickness
FAVORITE MANEUVER: Heart punch
CLOSEST ALLY: Clarence Mason
MOST HATED OPPONENT: Savio Vega
BIGGEST MATCH: Defeated Randy Savage in several best-of-three-falls matches leading up to WrestleMania X in 1994
IMMEDIATE GOAL: Help Faarooq and Clarence Mason make the Nation of Domination a force in wrestling
LONG-RANGE GOAL: Work his way into contention for one of the two singles titles in the WWF
HE SAID IT: "I don't give a damn what anyone thinks of me, and I'll do *whatever* it takes to get ahead in the WWF!"

This Month In ...

Inside Wrestling



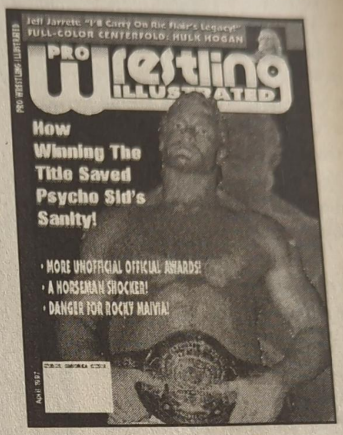
What did you think of **BRET HART'S** Survivor Series performance? He won, but he wasn't "The Excellence Of Execution" we're used to seeing, right? We'll explain why that execution will be excellent by WrestleMania ...

Ever wonder what it would be like to listen to **RODDY PIPER** reflect on his "rowdy" career? We visited Piper at his home and let him look at our old photos of him. He had a lot to say! ...

For weeks, rumors that **SIX** would join the NWO as the organization's chauffeur. They were unfounded, but we found how those rumors really got started!

All this—and much more!—
in the March 1997 issue of
Inside Wrestling

Pro Wrestling Illustrated



We wouldn't bet on **"PSYCHO" SID VICIOUS** turning out to be one of the longest-reigning WWF champions in history, but the mere fact that he did win that belt may have saved his sanity. We'll tell you why! ...

JEFF JARRETT explains just where he stands in WCW now that he's not with **THE FOUR HORSEMEN** or the **NEW WORLD ORDER** ...

Now that the Horsemen have rejected Jarrett, they might be looking to recruit someone else, someone with the heart of a lion ... If you're an NWO fan, you won't want to miss our dazzling full-color centerfold of **HULK HOGAN**!

All this—and much more!—
in the April 1997 issue of
Pro Wrestling Illustrated

NOW ON SALE!

NOW ON SALE!

Inquiring Reporter

THE QUESTION:

"Are veteran wrestlers getting too many matches in the major federations?"

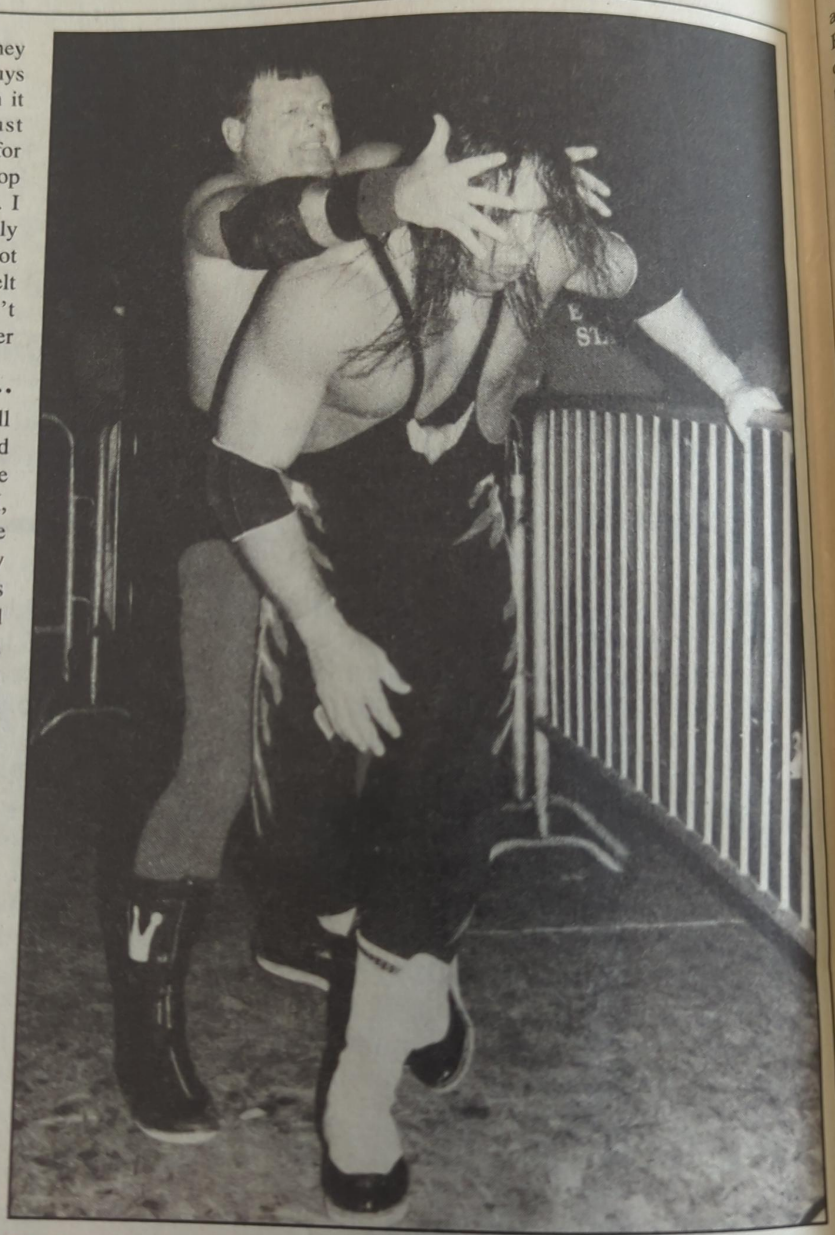
THE ANSWERS:

Ron Elcheson, Miami, FL: "Yes, they are. I am sick of seeing the older guys getting preferential treatment when it comes to title matches, too. Just because a guy has been wrestling for 20 years doesn't mean that he is a top contender who deserves title shots. I mean, how many times can we really see a guy like Arn Anderson get a shot at the WCW TV title? He held the belt several times already, but he hasn't done that much lately to earn another shot."

Julie Drake, Flint, MI: "I think it's all right for the older wrestlers to get good matches, since there are a lot of people that still come to see them wrestle. I, for one, recently attended my first live show in years just because Barry Windham was on the card. I always liked his no-nonsense style and wanted to see him now because I never got a chance to see him live when he was in his prime. He might not be in his prime anymore, but he's still great!"

Adam March, Oklahoma City, OK: "I think the younger wrestlers should be glad the older veterans are still around. It gives them a chance to match their skills with guys who are already legends. If a younger guy can beat a guy like Bret Hart or Jake Roberts, it will definitely make promoters look at him. It doesn't matter that the veteran isn't as great as he once was; it's the name that is of real value."

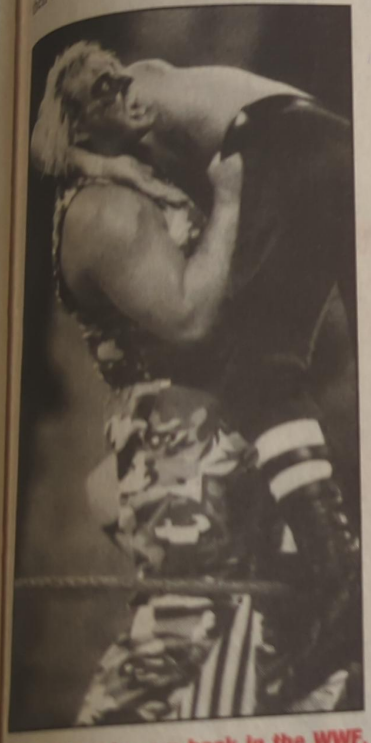
Tommy Wilberg, Spokane, WA: "I feel bad for the young, talented athletes that are stuck wrestling on the independent scene because some of the veteran guys won't retire. It's a



Who knows how much longer the on-again, off-again feud between Jerry Lawler and Bret Hart will last. Many of our readers think wrestling would be better off if veterans such as these two would step out of the spotlight.

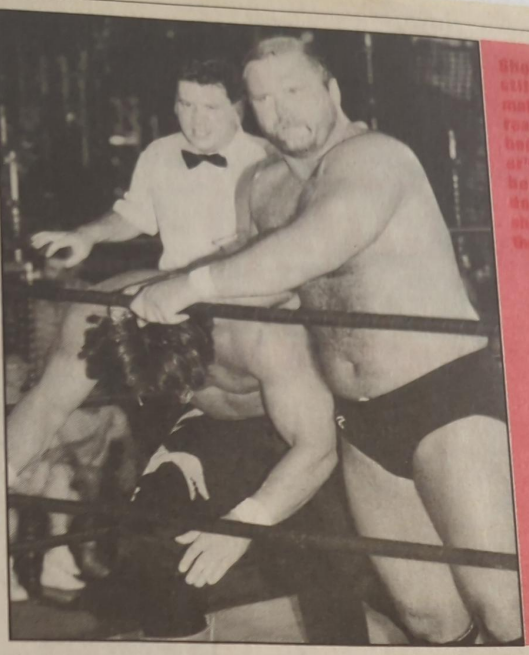
...ume that these guys who are way ...ast their best years won't step aside ...w some talented young guys can ...become stars, too. I mean, as long as ...ulk Hogan is around, other guys are ...going to have to keep waiting for ...their day in the spotlight."

Mary O'Leary, Leesburg, VA: "It doesn't bother me that the older guys are still going strong. Guys like Bret Hart, Arn Anderson, and Ric Flair deserve to be there for as long as they want. They have paid their dues over the years and learned hard lessons from the veterans before them. If they win titles, it's only because they are still at the top of their game and have worked hard for their success."



Jerry Windham is now back in the WWF, and at least some fans are happy about it. But of our readers, however, is upset that promoters keep offering so many veterans huge contracts.

...ude Seivers, *Albany, NY:* "It doesn't really amaze me that the older stars are still around. What amazes me is that major promotions are still willing to put money into these guys and allow



Should Arn Anderson still be getting title matches in WCW? One reader feels that just because "The Enforcer" held the WCW TV belt in the past, it doesn't mean he should be wrestling for the belt now.

them to get almost all the title shots. Of course these veteran wrestlers accept those title shots, since every wrestler is ego-driven. Like a guy such as Jerry Lawler is going to turn down a chance at another USWA heavyweight title. It's the promoters who keep them around."

Keri Renner, Pittsburgh, PA: "I think some veterans have gotten better with age. Terry Funk might not have held a world title since 1975, but he's still the toughest guy in wrestling today. I'd rather pay top dollar to see Funk beating the brains out of some young punk for fun than see two young greenhorns battling for a title. Respect isn't just handed to someone because they're a young prospect. It has to be earned."

Brooke Sherman, Nashville, TN: "I don't mind some veterans hanging around, but I am starting to mind seeing so many of them still here. If you run down the top 20 wrestlers in the '*PWI* 500,' almost half of them have been around for 10 years or more. I really think it's time for these guys to check their egos, step aside, and let the younger, newer guys like Rocky Maivia get their chance at immortality." □

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Independent Ratings

ECW — For period ending December 23, 1996

RANKING	M	CI	12-IH	THE SKINNY
1. Raven	+	8	1	Homewrecker
2. Shane Douglas	=	3	1	Only Francine loves him
3. The Sandman	-	11	1	Drowning sorrows in beer
4. Tommy Dreamer	=	12	4	Still hardcore
5. Sabu	+	5	2	Ready for Taz
6. Taz	+	10	6	Ready for Sabu
7. Brian Lee	-	2	7	Loves specialty matches
8. Rob Van Dam	-	1	8	Mini-slump
9. Chris Candido	+	1	9	Say goodbye to Skip
10. Stevie Richards	-	2	8	BWO forever!

USWA

RANKING	M	CI	12-IH	THE SKINNY
1. Jerry Lawler	+	62	1	On top ... *again*
2. Brian Christopher	+	35	2	Steady as always
3. Bill Dundee	=	2	3	Going good?
4. Akeem Muhammad	=	1	4	Friend of Faarooq?
5. Kareem Olajuwon	+	1	5	No more Reggie B. Fine
6. Flash Flanagan	=	2	5	No flash in the pan
7. Mo	-	1	7	Needs Mabel
8. Wolfie D	=	2	6	NOD for life
9. Steven Dunn	-	1	9	Sticking to tags
10. J.C. Ice	=	2	7	See Wolfie

M=momentum; CI=consecutive issues in ratings; 12-IH=12-issue high

AWF: AWF champion—Tito Santana; 1—Bob Orton; 2—Nailz; 3—Tony Atlas; 4—Greg Valentine; 5—Honky Tonk Man; 6—Tommy Rich; 7—Sgt. Slaughter; 8—Chris Adams; 9—One Man Gang; 10—Steve Doll.

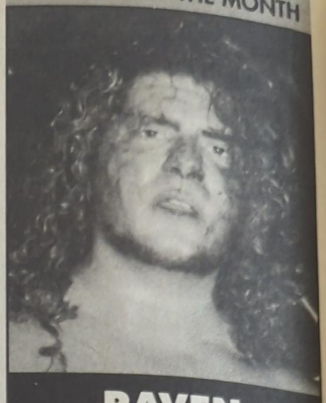
CWA: CWA champion—Kevin Sullivan; 1—Tony Rumble; 2—Tony Atlas; 3—King Kong Bundy; 4—Vic Steamboat; 5—Salvatore Sincere; 6—Knuckles Nelson; 7—Doink the Clown; 8—Steve Corino; 9—Mohammed Hussein; 10—Pink Assassin.

NWA: NWA champion—Dan Severn; 1—Reckless Youth; 2—Ace Darling; 3—Inferno Kid; 4—Doink the Clown; 5—Rik Ratchet; 6—Gus the Greek; 7—Jason Knight; 8—Rocco Dorsey; 9—East L.A.; 10—Jimmy Shoulders.

PCW: PCW champion—Freight Train Jones; 1—Mark Mest; 2—Cheetah Master; 3—Lance Diamond; 4—Ace Darling; 5—Boogie Woogie Brown; 6—Troy Mest; 7—Maxx Crimson; 8—Ray Odyssey; 9—The Cremator; 10—Diabolos Macabre.

PWF: PWF champion—Italian Stallion; 1—Madd Maxxine; 2—George South; 3—Carolina Dreamer; 4—Terry Austin; 5—Running Youth; 6—Chris Hamrick; 7—Cruel Connection II; 8—Masked Maniac; 9—Star Ryder; 10—Gladiator II.

WRESTLER OF THE MONTH



RAVEN

For months, Raven made The Sandman's life hell. And not just during their many violent, bloody ECW matches. No, that was the least of the pain Raven caused Sandman. Raven hurt Sandman the most by turning his family against him.

For months, Lori Fullington, Sandman's ex-wife, and Tyler Fullington, his estranged son, stood in Raven's corner during his matches with Sandman. Both of them even went as far as to attack Sandman with his own Singapore cane.

In other words, Raven is a pretty despicable man. But he has also proved he's a very good wrestler. He defeated Sandman in a barbed-wire match for his second ECW heavyweight title on December 7, and he did so without the help of Lori and Tyler, who did not appear at ringside. He has also looked very good in matches since.

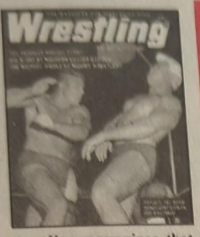
"I don't care what anyone thinks of me," said Raven. "All that matters is I'm back on top again."

Bad person, good wrestler—not a bad combination for an ECW athlete.

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

Wrestling historians, rejoice! Some of the back issues in this ad have not been offered for sale for more than a decade—but a recent transfer of warehouse inventory from New York to Pennsylvania uncovered a small supply of these classic publications! Obviously, supplies are extremely limited, so all magazines will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis only. Prices quoted are based on the rarity of the issue and the number of available copies. For speediest service, use VISA or MasterCard or make payment by money order or certified check. Please don't send cash! Don't miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime chance to own a memorable piece of wrestling history! Once they're gone, they'll never be offered for sale again—so order today!

WRESTLING REVUE



Published between 1959 and 1964, *Wrestling Revue* is acknowledged as one of the finest series of wrestling magazines ever produced. These beautiful editions, all edited and published by Stanley Weston (founder of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*, *The Wrestler*, and *Inside Wrestling*, among so many other titles) set a standard for all wrestling magazines that followed, and are available now for the first time in many years!

Fall 1961 Edouard Carpentier challenges Floyd Patterson, Bruiser vs. Cowboy Ellis, The Zebra Kid, killer holds, action at The Kiel, Nick Bockwinkel vs. Dr. X, and full-color action of the Bastiens vs. Shires & Nelson. **$25**

December 1961 An extensive Buddy Rogers interview, Bobo Brazil, Fred Blassie, Pedro Gonzez, the Torres brothers, Whipper Watson, "Sailor" Art Thomas, Ricki Starr, plus a full-color centerfold of Mark Lewin & Don Curtis. **$35**

February 1962 Dick Beyer, Mitsu Arakawa, Edouard Carpentier vs. Lou Thesz, Angelo Poffo, a five-girl battle royal, Don and Jackie Fargo, Billy Zabyszko, Jerry Chene, plus a full-color centerfold of Guy & Joe Brunetti. **$30**

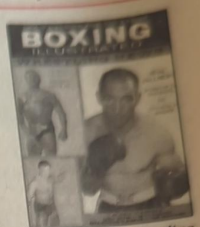
April 1962 Wilbur Snyder, Luis Martinez, Madison Square Garden closeup, Ann Bryzner, Billy Wolfe, Don Leo Jonathan vs. Pat O'Connor, closeup on Argentina, plus a full-color centerfold of Bearcat Wright. **$30**

June 1962 Eddie Graham, Verne Gagne, wrestlers vs. boxers, Dory Dixon, Gustav Eric, Tony Lanza, Lorraine Johnson vs. Kay Noble, Skull Murphy & Don Bernard, The Crusher, plus a full-color centerfold of Red Bastien. **$25**

December 1963 The Destroyer, "Maniac" Mark Lewin, Paul Diamond, Ernie Ladd, Judy Grable, Bill Watts, Pat O'Connor, Don Duffy, The Scufflin' Sheiks, plus a full-color centerfold of Lou Thesz. **$35**

February 1964 Edouard Carpentier vs. Killer Kowalski, Florida wrestling, Mad Dog Vachon, Fabulous Moolah, Fritz Von Erich, Rene Goulet, Cyclops, plus a full-color centerfold of Bruno Sammartino. **$35**

BOXING ILLUSTRATED/ WRESTLING NEWS



In November 1958, Stanley Weston launched *Boxing Illustrated/Wrestling News*, an innovative concept in sports magazines. Each issue's content consisted of approximately 60 percent boxing and 40 percent wrestling, resulting in the most complete magazine for ring afficianados the world has ever known.

May 1959 ***Boxing:*** Ray Robinson, James Jeffries, Rube Vargas, Willie Pep, Joey Maxim, Denny Moyer. ***Wrestling:*** Gene Stanlee, Larry Hamilton, Happy Humphrey, "Cowboy" Bob Ellis. **$25**

June 1959 ***Boxing:*** Gene Fullmer, Jack Britton, Gustav Scholz, Mauro Vazquez, Rocky Graziano. ***Wrestling:*** Buddy Rogers, Don Leo Jonathan, Hard Boiled Haggerty, Omaya Kato. **$35**

September 1959 ***Boxing:*** Carmen Basilio, the perfect kayo, Tiger Flowers, Joe Brown, Paolo Rosi. ***Wrestling:*** Edouard Carpentier, Ricki Starr, Enrique Torres. **$25**

October 1962 ***Boxing:*** Special edition previewing the Floyd Patterson vs. Sonny Liston bout! ***Wrestling:*** "Handsome" Johnny Barend, Andre Drapp, "Sailor" Art Thomas, five pages of results. **$30**

October 1963 ***Boxing:*** Cassius Clay, Joe Lynch, Frankie Narvaez, Tommy Loughran. ***Wrestling:*** Crusher vs. Verne Gagne, Tony Manous, The Dirty Daltons, results. **$25**

February 1964 ***Boxing:*** Sonny Liston, Joey Archer, 1963 in review, Cassius Clay. ***Wrestling:*** Bruno Sammartino vs. Gorilla Monsoon, Emile Dupre, Bruiser vs. Bob Ellis, results. **$30**

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

WRESTLING REVUE

- ☐ Fall 1961
- ☐ December 1961
- ☐ February 1962
- ☐ April 1962
- ☐ June 1962
- ☐ December 1963
- ☐ February 1964

BOXING ILLUSTRATED/ WRESTLING NEWS

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- ☐ October 1963
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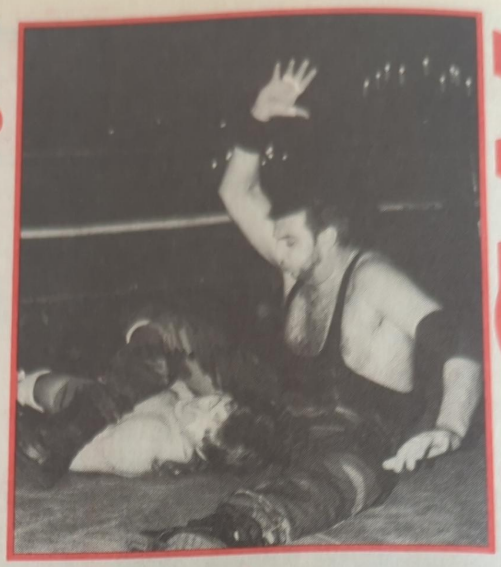
Focus on...

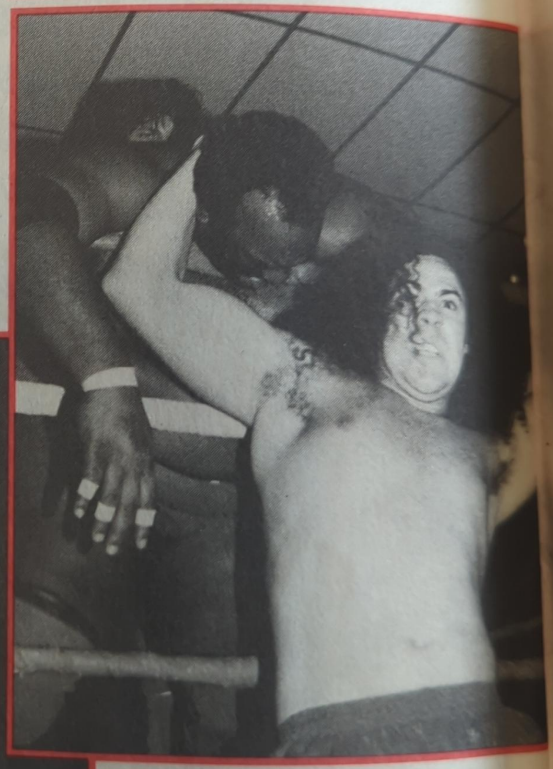
Photos by Jason Ross Lavin

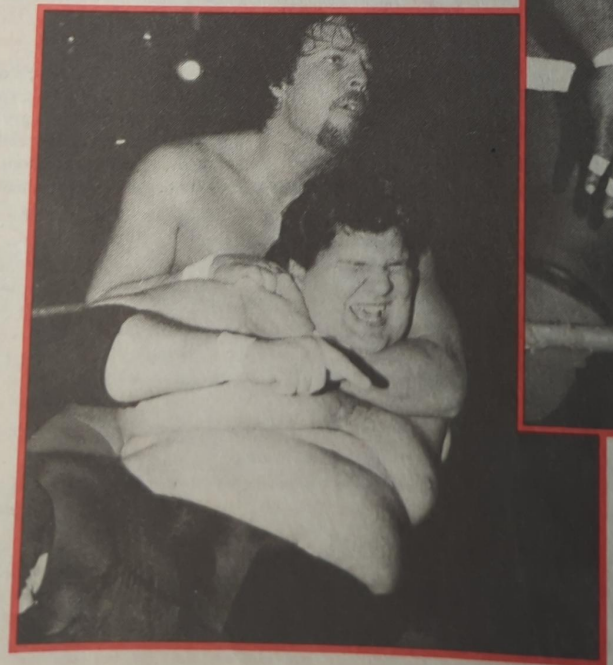
DIABLOS MACABRE vs. TROY MEST: It's bad enough when one man hits another man when he's down, but Macabre did even worse. He hit Mest while Mest was down *and* draped over the middle rope.



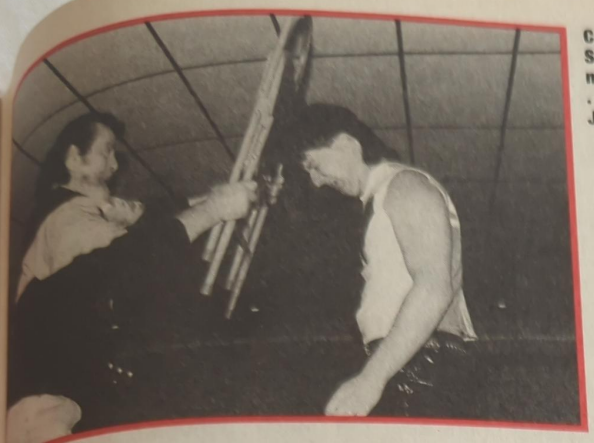
JIHAD HUSSEIN vs. HIGH VOLTAGE: Hussein might not be another Hulk Hogan, but his legdrop is pretty good. High Voltage had trouble getting up after this one.

PCW

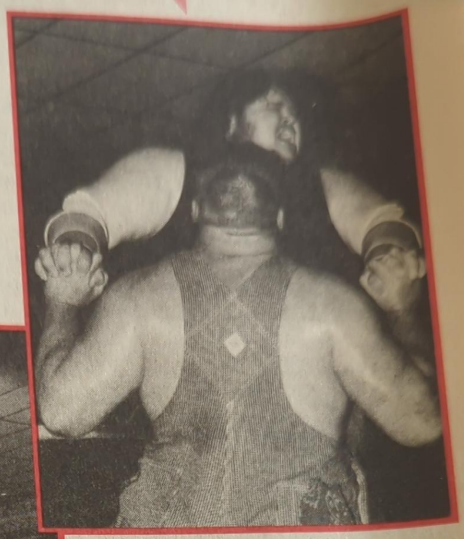




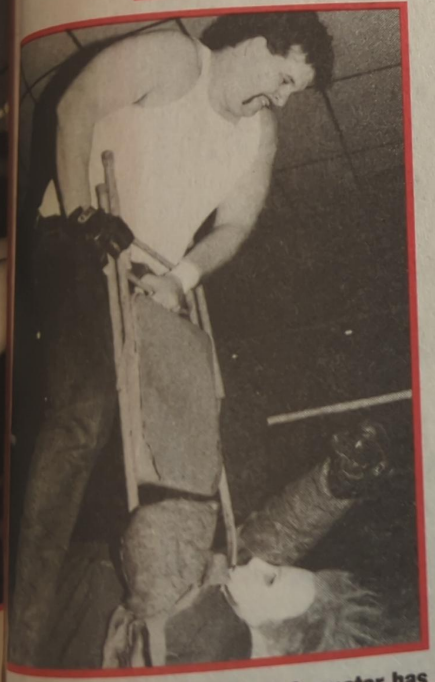
LANCE DIAMOND & JULIO SANCHEZ vs. ROMEO CATINO & BOOGIE WOOGIE BROWN: Diamond was able to hold off Catino with a simple rear chinlock (left), but his partner found that the ropes can be very good weapons against Brown if used properly (above).



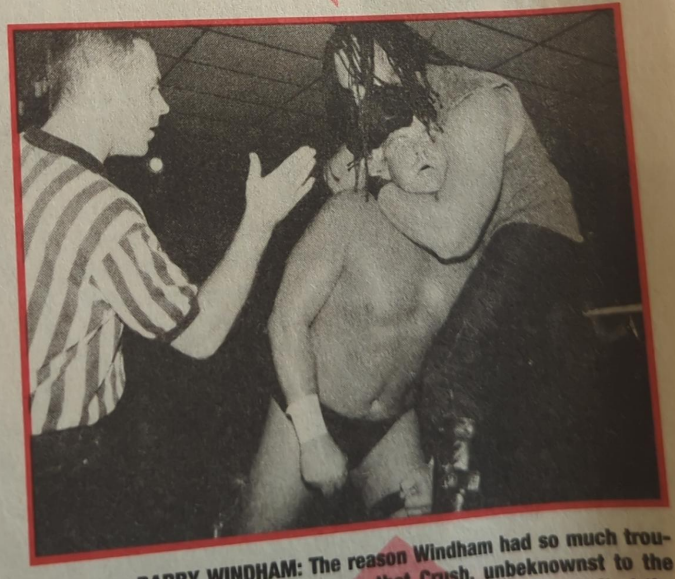
CAPT. LOU ALBANO vs. JUDD THE STUD: The Sicilian stretcher match between a legendary manager and an up-and-coming one was short . . . but interesting. After this swing of the chair, Judd left the ringside area on a stretcher.



FREIGHT TRAIN JONES vs. MARK MEST: Jones thought he had Mest pretty well stunned when he knocked him to the canvas with a shoulderblock (left), but Mest came right back and easily won a test of strength (above).



E MAYHEM vs. THE CREMATOR: Cremator has wn that he's the master of the casket match nsylvania Championship Wrestling, but he n't too comfortable with a chair jammed into hroat.



CRUSH vs. BARRY WINDHAM: The reason Windham had so much trouble escaping this sleeperhold was that Crush, unbeknownst to the referee at first, was actually choking him with his leather belt at the same time.

Newsline

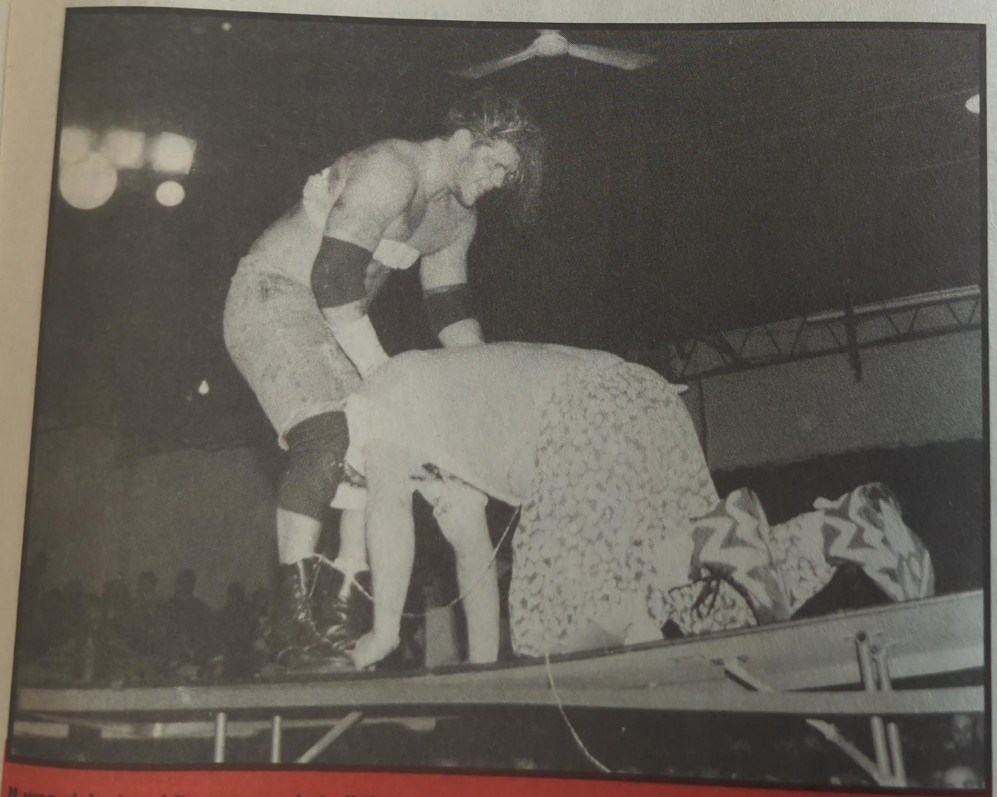
By Dave Rosenbaum

INDEPENDENTS

RAVEN HAS ALWAYS claimed that he's a cut above the rest. Well, now not only is he really a cut above the rest of ECW, he's even several cuts above what he was on the morning of December 7, 1996. Talk about paying the price for victory! Raven defeated **The Sandman** for his second ECW heavyweight title and afterward looked like he had been through a war—and he had!

Raven vs. The Sandman is by far the most interesting feud on the independent scene these days. Raven had won the loyalty of Sandman's ex-wife, **Lori Fullington**, and son, **Tyler**, and had them doing his dirty deeds for him—especially to Sandman—on several occasions. But this time, Raven had to beat the Sandman alone as Lori and Tyler were banned from ringside by Tod Gordon.

The barbed-wire match at ECW Arena in Philadelphia was gory even by ECW's violent standards. Both men sustained numerous cuts to their bodies and were given tetanus shots after the match. Sandman actually clipped off several strands of barbed wire and wrapped them around his own body, the better to use himself as a human rusty razor blade on his arch-rival. No love was lost in this battle, but when Sandman laid Raven on a table and tried to dive onto him, Raven got out of the way just in the nick of time, and Sandman crashed through the table. That set up a



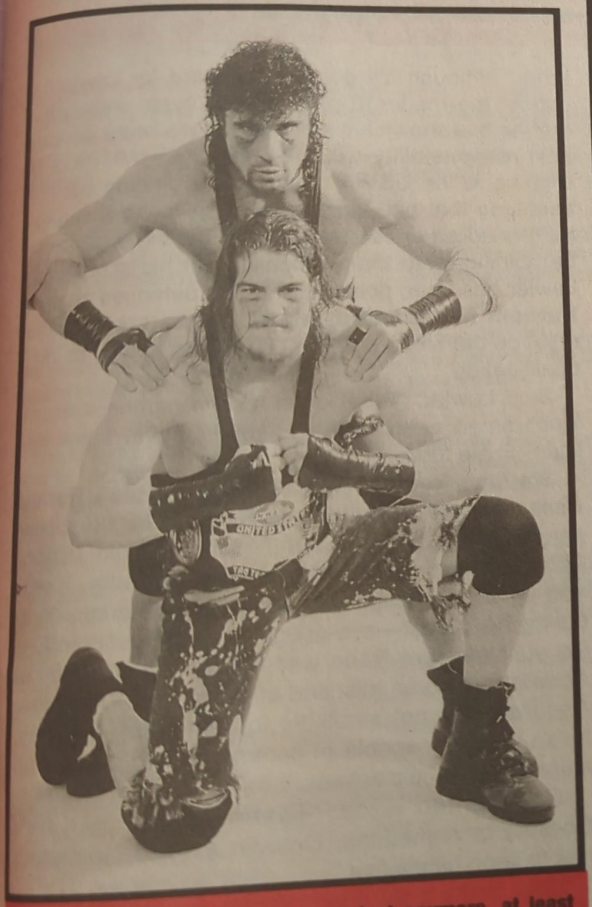
It was violent and it was gory, but all the suffering on December 7 was worth it for Raven. He defeated The Sandman in a barbed-wire match to capture his second ECW heavyweight title.

DDT, the pin, and the title change.

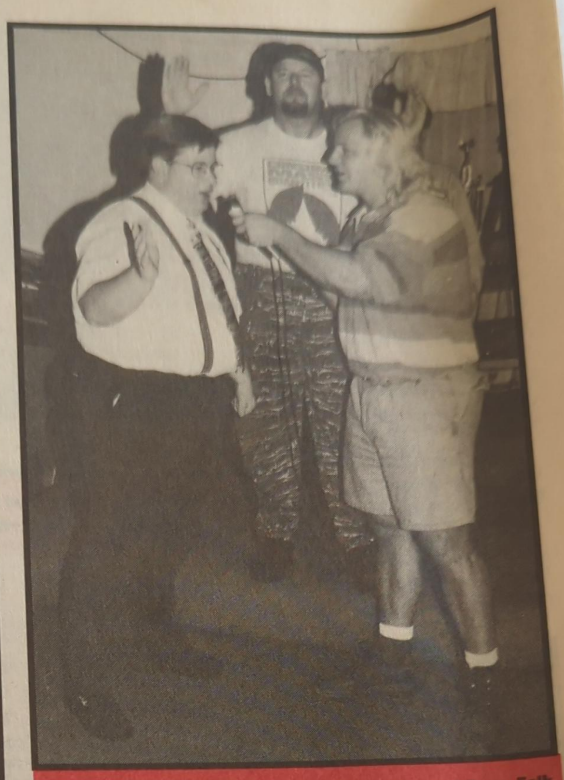
But by no means did Raven's victory settle the feud. In all likelihood, it intensified the hatred the two top men in ECW have for each other. Raven claims he has a master plan, while Sandman denied that he was distraught over the loss.

"One loss doesn't make a career," Sandman said. "Now that he's got the belt, he's gonna have to defend it, and that means he's gonna have to beat me again. This is do-or-die, and the only way he's gonna stop me is to kill me. I'll be back. That's a promise."

Is it legal? Former USWA matchmaker/ general manager and current manager **Randy Hales** now wants to be known as **Randy X**. Hales, or Mr. X, is a member of the **Nation of Domination** in the USWA and obviously feels his given name doesn't imply much domination. Maybe **Eric Bischoff** should change his name to **Eric X**. And speaking of name changes, **Reggie B. Fine**, another member of the Nation of Domination, wants to be called **Kareem Olajuwon**. No relation to NBA star **Hakeem Olajuwon**, of course ... **The Wrecking Crew** won the Windy City Wrestling tag team title from **Devastation Inc**. The Wrecking Crew is **Frank Melson** and **Bulldozer Rollins**; Devastation Inc. is **Mike Anthony** and **Steve Boz** ... **The Lost Boys** won the NWA U.S. tag team belts, sending **Downward Spiral—Adrian Hall** and **Twiggy Ramirez**—on a downward spiral ... **"Hot Body" Johnny Paradise** beat **"Arrogant" Otis Apollo** in the finals of a tournament for the vacant Championship Wrestling Federation TV title. Paradise is now the No. 456,327 contender for the WCW World heavyweight title.



The Lost Boys–Wolf and Yar–aren't lost anymore, at least not inside NWA rings. They defeated Downward Spiral to regain the NWA U.S. tag team championship.



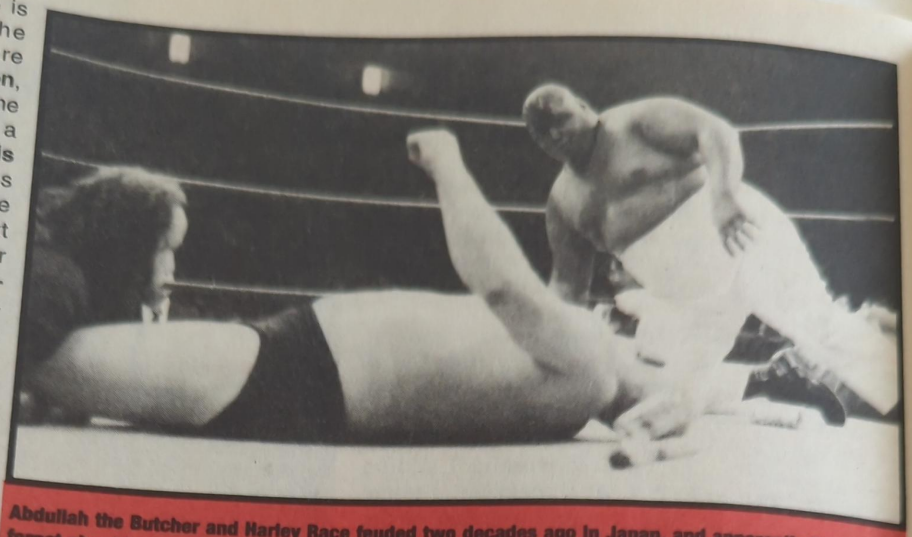
Jeff Jarrett chats it up with Ferrin the Fan and Tony Falk during an independent card in Tennessee this summer. Dave Rosenbaum wonders if Jarrett, who's having a hard time making friends in WCW, will soon return to the USWA.

Just wondering, part I: Is the New World Order an independent federation?

Just wondering, part II: Now that he's been snubbed by **The Four Horsemen** and snubbed the New World Order, is **Jeff Jarrett** planning a return to

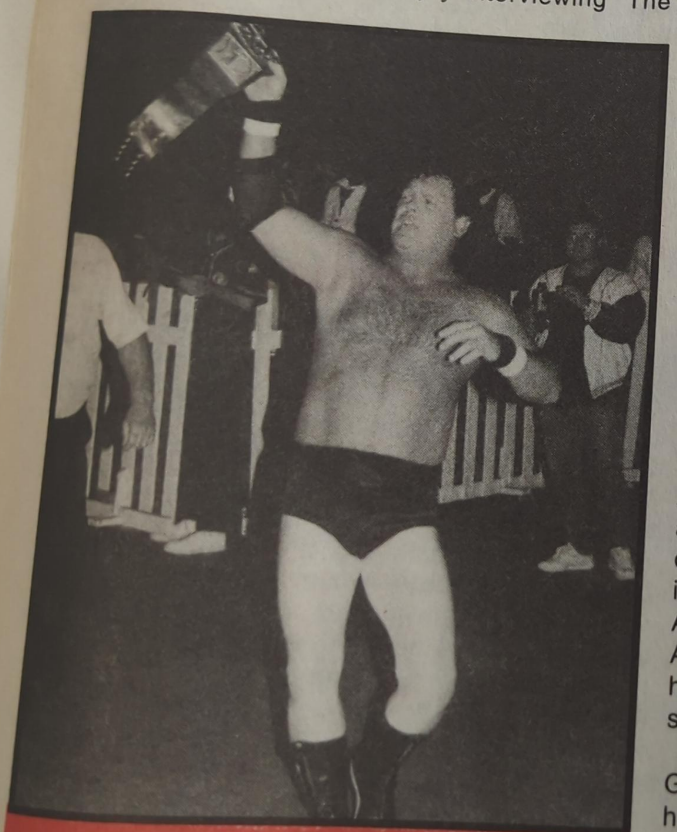
the only place he is really wanted: the USWA? And where does **Arn Anderson**, a backstabber, come off calling Jarrett a backstabber, or **Chris Benoit**, who lacks killer instinct, come off accusing Jarrett of lacking killer instinct, or **Steve McMichael**, who laughingly calls himself a master strategist, come off saying Jarrett is no improvement?

Jeff, come back to the indys where you belong.



Abdullah the Butcher and Harley Race feuded two decades ago in Japan, and apparently Race never forgot about it. He attacked Abby for no good reason in the Orient this fall.

Jerry Lawler regaining the USWA heavyweight title from **The Colorado Kid** was good news for reporters who enjoy interviewing "The King," although it's going to be hard for Lawler to expect the media to give him an even break now that he has shown his surly side. Let's hope journalistic responsibility will prevail. Meanwhile, Kid is slipping in the USWA rankings and finding out the hard way that one victory does not make a career. He'll need an encore; otherwise, his big victory will be nothing more than a highlight for his scrapbook. Lawler has been doing well in title defenses against **Kareem Muhammed**, who lost the turkey battle royal on the same card that he lost to Lawler by disqualification.



Jerry Lawler and Sid Vicious were rivals in the USWA during the second half of 1994 and part of 1995. Now they're friends. That might not last if Lawler doesn't grant Sid a shot at the USWA heavyweight title.

Said Lawler: "What does a man named Kareem Muhammed need with a turkey? I never knew the Islamics ate turkey."

Six-time former NWA World champion Harley Race attacked **Abdullah the Butcher** for no apparent reason on a December 7 card in Tokyo, Japan. Abby had just pinned **Ryo Myake**. In reality, if you add up all the despicable things Abdullah has done during his career—eye-gougings, face feasts, etc.—it's possible that Race was simply getting back at Abdullah for some misdeed of years past. Of course, Abdullah was not available for comment—actually, he's usually incapable of comment—and was rather stunned by Race's actions.

Commented Race: "That maniac thinks he's Godzilla or something. Once in a while, somebody has to keep him in line."

Well, that's it for now. Word is that ECW is planning a pay-per-view event for sometime in March or April, which means that even if there are none within your 100-mile radius, you'll be able to take time to enjoy an indy. So do it! □

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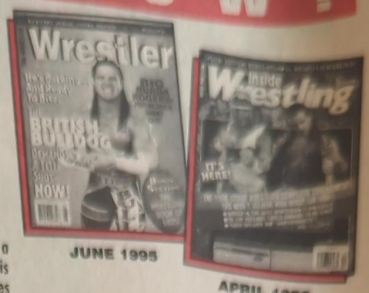

JUNE 1995 APRIL 1996

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WINTER 1995 *INSIDE WRESTLING* gives you the birthdays of more than 180 of the hottest wrestlers in the sport today in a special pullout calendar and datebook. This book also features great historical information for each month!

APRIL 1996 *INSIDE WRESTLING* presents the third edition of the Inside Wrestling Computer Tournament, and the results just get more startling each year! The highlight of this annual 88-page special, as our readers have told us, is the computer-generated centerfold action shot from the tournament final.

JULY 1996 *INSIDE WRESTLING* takes you away from the wrestling ring and into the personal lives of wrestling's hottest stars. What makes Sunny cry? What's Sabu's favorite TV show? What's the dumbest thing Shawn Michaels has ever done? What scares Jim Cornette? What brings Sting down? This 88-pager includes color shots of Sting, Sunny, Sabu, and Michaels.

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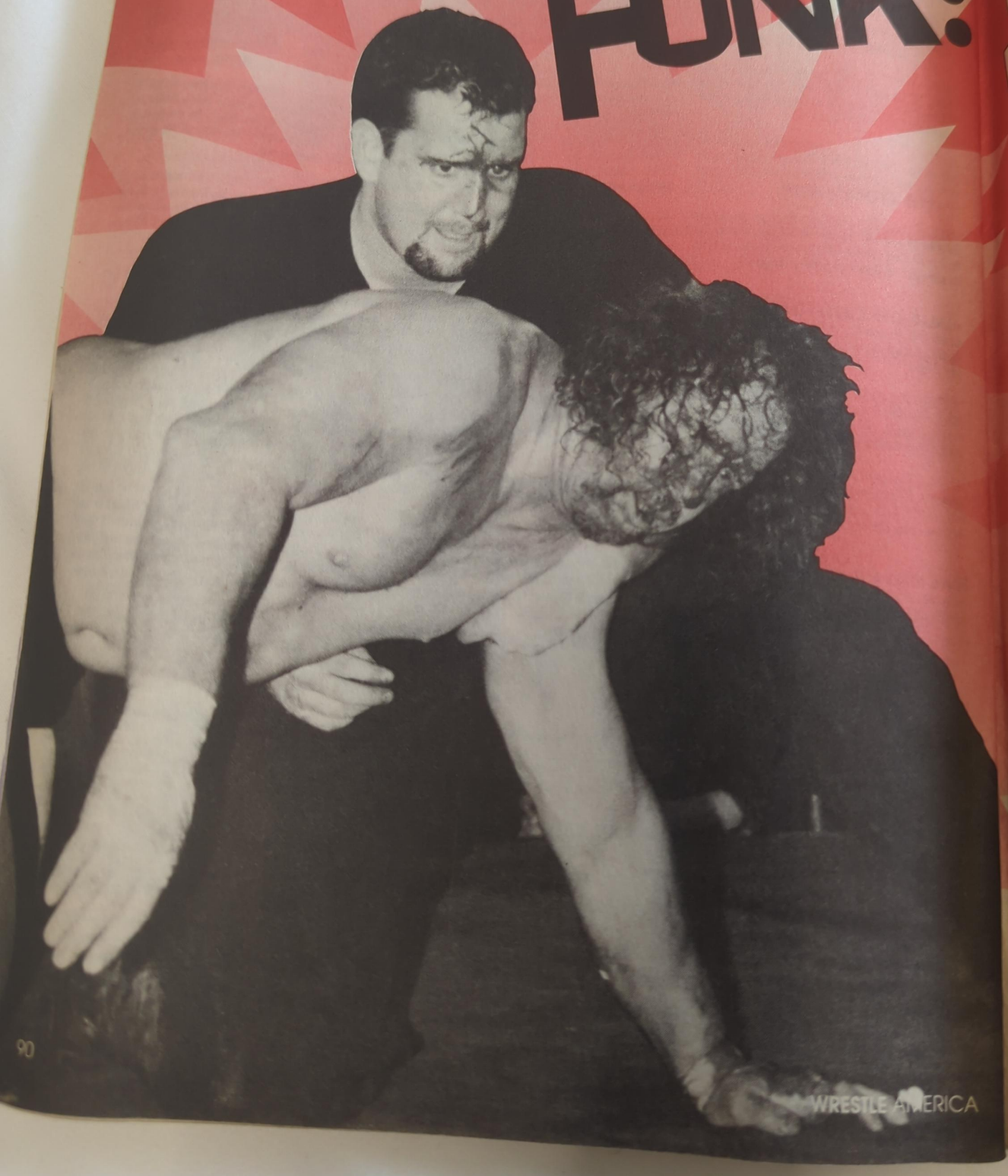

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ALL PRAISE THE LORD OF EXTREME!

He does things that would humble a competitor half his age. He said he would retire, but he couldn't stay away. In the land of the extreme, he is the most extreme of them all. If violence is science, Terry Funk is Einstein! In a word: *amazing!*

By Craig Peters

THE REACTION WHEN Terry Funk enters a dressing room is unique in a sport in which the unique and unusual are commonplace.

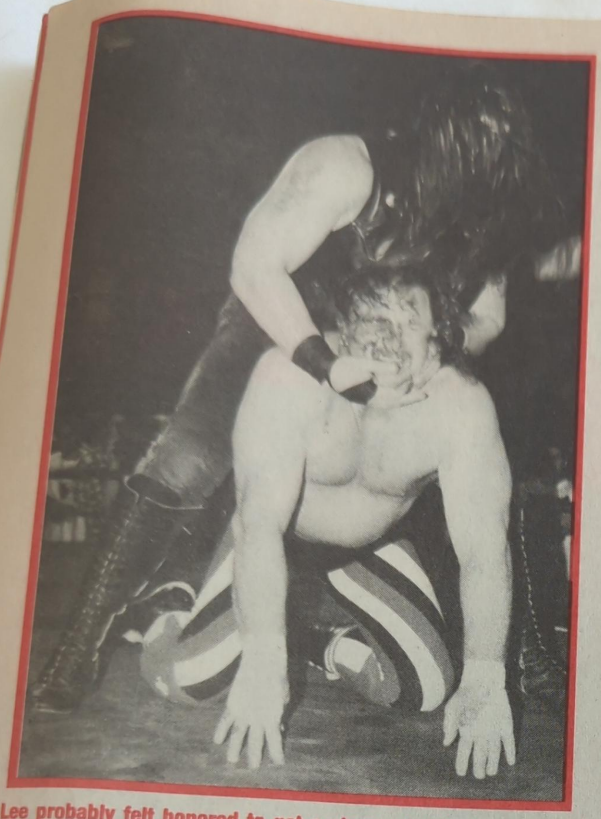
"It's a sight to see," says Paul E. Dangerously, a fixture in ECW dressing rooms. "The man has *presence*. When he enters the room, all eyes turn to him. When he speaks, all ears are paying attention. It's probably what it must be like to see President Clinton walking into a room of freshman Senators."

ECW broadcaster Joey Styles agrees.

"There's only one Terry Funk, and ECW's got him," Styles says. "You can take the most crazed competitor in ECW, get him all riled up and screaming and ready to tear the esophagus out of his competitor, but if Funk walks by at that moment—it's like freeze-frame."

What it all boils down to, this unusual dressing room demeanor, is respect.

Upon returning to ECW in November, Terry Funk wasted no time pounding Brian Lee with a chair (above) and driving his head into the mat with a DDT (below). The lord of the extreme was back!



Lee probably felt honored to get a chance to bloody the face of Funk at the "November To Remember" card. Even some of Funk's enemies speak about him in almost reverential tones.

After all, for most of the competitors in ECW, Terry Funk, 52, is ... well, not to put too fine a point on it, about twice their age.

"It's incredible," admits the self-proclaimed king of the ECW hardcores, Tommy Dreamer. "I don't know what keeps him going. Whatever it is, you have to respect it. Here's a man who's done it all, seen it all, and been it all. And after all those matches and all those years, he's earned the right to kick his feet up, suck back a few brews, and take it easy.

"But he's like a cross between the Energizer bunny and the devil himself!" Dreamer continues. "Somewhere deep inside, he has some sort of demonic fire that just keeps him going ... and going ... and going ... and it's absolutely incredible."

The Sandman concurs.

"I think a lot of the guys here in ECW look at Terry Funk, and they see a guy with a lot of miles on him, but a guy who won't give in to the miles, to the years, to the injuries, to anything. And you just have to respect that, because that's what ECW is all about. Get hit with chairs? Don't give in. Get slashed by barbed-wire? Don't give in. Have flames blown in your face? Don't give in. Terry Funk hasn't given in ... and he's not about to anytime soon, either."

"Funk is, in a lot of ways, and I'm gonna have to explain this, he's the future of this sport," says Rob Van Dam. "I mean, a lot of the guys around here, we love this sport, and we love ECW. But when you're in a sport as tough as wrestling, and a wrestling federation as tough as ECW, you worry a lot. You worry about getting hurt, and you worry about getting hurt so badly that you'll never wrestle again. The fact that Funk takes a licking and keeps on ticking, well, it gives a lot of us around here a lot of hope, a lot of confidence that we'll be able to still kick some serious butt 20 or 25 years down the line."

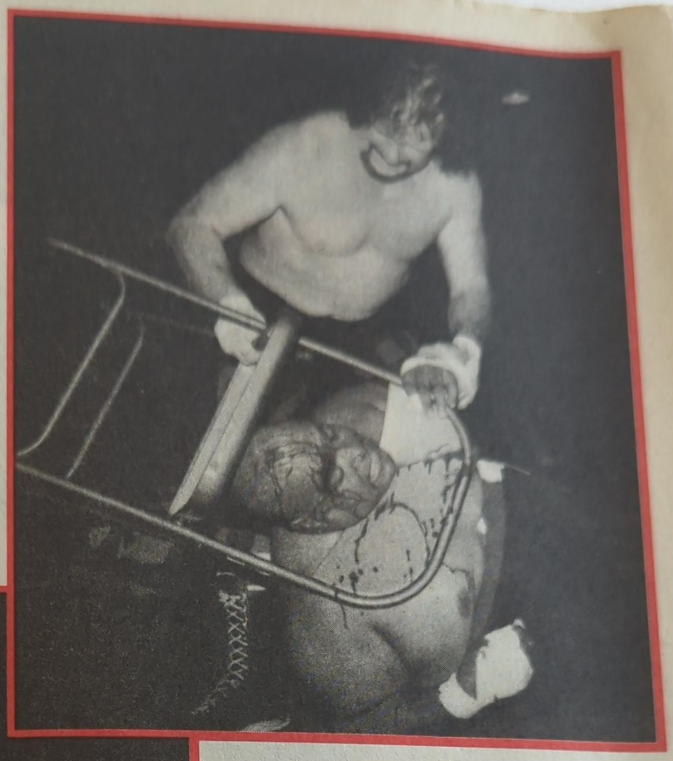
"There is nothing that anybody anywhere can take away from Terry Funk," says Steve Williams. "He's been there, done that, and been to hell and back a thousand times over, and then some. But you know something? With a guy like Funk, wrestling on the edge and doing everything it takes to win is in his blood. It's as natural and as important to his survival as breathing or eating or sleeping.

"Yeah," Williams said with a chuckle, "Terry said

Back in 1994, Terry and brother Dory were involved in one of the goriest ECW barbed-wire matches ever. Dory had to pull some strands of the wire out of Terry's head afterward, but Terry didn't complain about it.

he was retiring. Right. Let me tell you something about Terry retiring. When they drop his casket into the ground, they're gonna have to go a lot deeper than the standard six feet, 'cause that son of a gun is so tough, he's gonna be scraping and kicking and screaming and yappin' for a while even after the last breath has been gone. You best believe it. 'cause that's what Terry is like. And maybe—maybe!—after that last shovel of dirt gets tossed on there, *then* he'll start to *think* about retiring. Tougher than beef jerky left out in the sun to petrify, he is."

"I will be completely and totally honest, as I always am," said Raven in almost reverential tones. "Terry Funk is



Light someone like Cactus Jack on fire (below)? Wrap a chair around Abdullah the Butcher's bloody head (right)? Funk thrives on this kind of thing. He's 52 now, but he could be doing this when he's 70!

like a Phoenix from the ashes, rising up to new life just as others in the sport have him written off for good. I was as amazed as everyone else when I heard that he was returning to ECW, and I am as impressed as everyone else that he has not only returned, but returned in style, in top form, and prepared to do whatever is necessary to protect his territory and his reputation. He is a man of rare character, and his very presence in ECW demands the attention and respect of anyone on the face of the planet who deigns to call himself a serious wrestling fan."

"He's nuts!" said Stevie Richards. "He's absolutely nuts! And I love it! He kicks butt! He's the man!

"We should all, every last one of us here in ECW, be able to get down to it as tough as Terry when we get to his age. He sets a pace that anyone in the sport would be hard-pressed to keep up with. How can you *not* respect that?"

Indeed, you have to. Which is why the very presence of Terry Funk in ECW creates a universal wash of opinion among competitors who, on any other issue, could never hope to agree.

And what does Funk himself think of all the praise, of all the compliments, of all the hardest hardcores in the sport lining up to offer respect the likes of which virtually nobody else in the sport commands?

"Puke on 'em!" Funk said curtly. "I got nothing to say. I do all my talking in the ring." □

And how!

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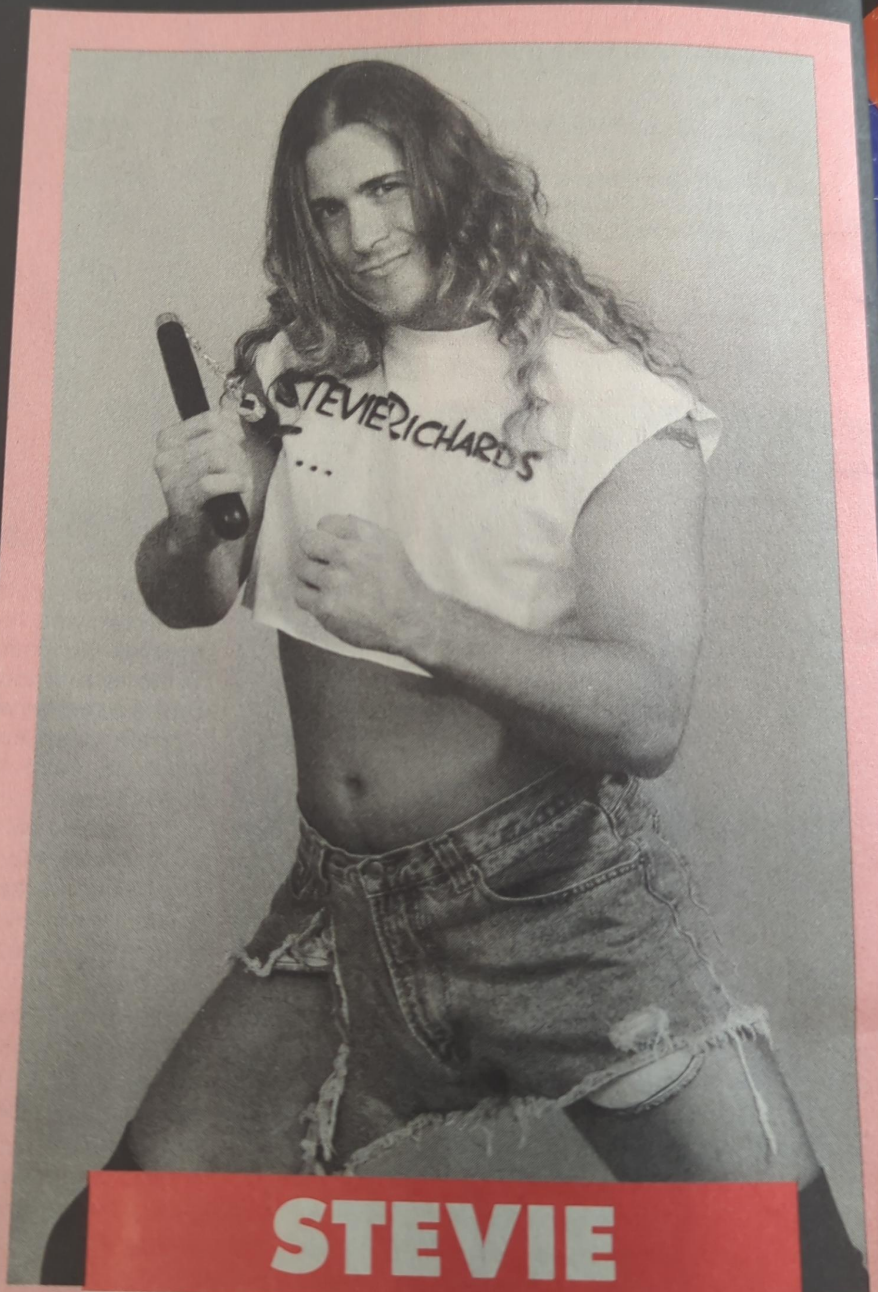

STEVIE RICHARDS

HEIGHT: 6'2"
WEIGHT: 227
HOMETOWN: Philadelphia, PA
MAJOR TITLES HELD: Pro Wrestling Express tag team (with The Blue Meanie, 1996); ECW tag team (with Raven, twice in 1995)
BIGGEST STRENGTHS: Speed and agility
BIGGEST WEAKNESS: Sometimes doesn't take his wrestling serious enough
FAVORITE MANEUVER: Stevie-kick (superkick)
CLOSEST ALLY: The Blue Meanie
MOST HATED OPPONENT: The Sandman
BIGGEST MATCH: Teamed with Raven (his hero) to beat Public Enemy for the ECW tag team title, June 20, 1995
IMMEDIATE GOAL: Help the Blue World Order take over ECW
LONG-RANGE GOAL: Get an animated series featuring him and The Blue Meanie on Saturday morning TV
HE SAID IT: "The NWO has nothing on the BWO! We're younger, smarter, and a lot better looking!"

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